ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY

President

Leadership Profile

November 2026



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Executive Summary

St. Thomas University (STU) seeks its next president at a significant moment in the institution's history. Founded in 1961 and rooted in the tradition of the Augustinian Fathers whose educational mission originated at the Universidad de Santo Tomás de Villanueva in Havana, Cuba, the University has evolved into one of the largest Catholic universities in the Southeast. As the only Catholic archdiocesan-sponsored university in Florida, STU combines a commitment to academic excellence, professional preparation, faith formation, and service to others within one of the nation's most diverse and rapidly growing regions. The president will position the institution to achieve its aspiration of becoming the Great Catholic University of the South.

Located in Miami Gardens, Florida, St. Thomas University serves more than 8,700 students from 68 countries and nearly all 50 states. The University enrolls substantial numbers of first-generation college students and remains deeply committed to educational access and economic mobility. Approximately 73 percent of first-time students identify as first-generation college students. The University offers undergraduate, graduate, doctoral, and professional programs across a broad range of disciplines, including business, law, education, health sciences, nursing, theology, psychology, criminal justice, and the liberal arts. STU is especially proud of the growth in law school attendance and the many graduates serving the South Florida community.

The University enters this presidential transition following a period of substantial institutional growth. Enrollment has increased significantly over the past several years, accompanied by the expansion of academic offerings, investments in facilities and student life, growth in athletics, and enhanced philanthropic support. Guided by its strategic vision, Pursue Excellence, St. Thomas University has focused on strengthening academic quality, enhancing the student experience, expanding strategic partnerships, and advancing operational excellence while remaining firmly grounded in its Catholic identity and mission.

This growth has been accompanied by significant institutional advancement. The University has expanded its academic offerings, strengthened philanthropic support, added more than 600,000 square feet of new facilities, and enhanced the student experience through new residence halls, dining facilities, a student union, and the Gus Machado College of Business. STU's commitment to student outcomes has earned national recognition, including a Carnegie Foundation recognition as an Opportunity University.

Reporting to the Board of Trustees, the president serves as the chief executive officer of the University and is responsible for providing strategic, academic, financial, and operational leadership. The STU President manages a $58M endowment, including unrestricted, board-designated, and restricted funds, and an operating budget of approximately $123M.

St. Thomas University enters this transition from a position of strength while also recognizing the opportunities that accompany continued growth. The next president will guide the institution through its next phase of development by strengthening student success outcomes, ensuring long-term financial sustainability, advancing academic excellence and innovation, supporting a vibrant campus community, and deepening the University's distinctive identity as a Catholic institution serving a diverse and global student population. As the University's chief ambassador, the president will also play a central role in strengthening philanthropic support, cultivating community and business partnerships, and enhancing the institution's visibility and reputation throughout South Florida and beyond.

The successful candidate will be a practicing Catholic and mission-driven leader who embraces the University’s Catholic identity, demonstrates a commitment to student success, and possesses the strategic, financial, and operational leadership necessary to guide a complex and growing institution. The successful candidate will have an earned, advanced degree from an accredited institution of higher learning.

To submit a nomination or express personal interest in this position, please see Procedure for Candidacy at the end of this profile.

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Role of the President

Reporting directly to the Board of Trustees, the President of St. Thomas University is the chief executive officer of the institution, providing executive leadership, strategic direction, operational oversight, policy approval, budgeting, and program development aligned with the university's Catholic mission. The president provides leadership for the Cabinet, which serves as the university's executive leadership team, assisting in strategic direction and operational oversight to fulfill the university's mission.

The Cabinet comprises senior administrators responsible for various university functions, including academics, finance, technology, human resources, mission and ministry, marketing, strategic planning, and institutional effectiveness. This collaborative approach ensures that STU's strategic initiatives align with its mission and effectively serve its diverse student body and dedicated community of nearly 900 faculty and staff.

The St. Thomas University President manages a $58M endowment, which includes unrestricted, board-designated, and restricted funds, as well as an operating budget of approximately $123M.



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Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

St. Thomas University enters this presidential transition at a defining moment in its history. Guided by a strong Catholic mission, a growing national profile, and remarkable institutional momentum, the University has experienced significant expansion in enrollment, academic programs, student outcomes, and community impact. At the same time, continued growth will require thoughtful financial stewardship, strong organizational leadership, and a clear strategic vision to ensure long-term sustainability and excellence. The next president will have the opportunity to build on this momentum by strengthening academic quality, advancing student success, deepening the University's Catholic identity, and positioning St. Thomas University as a leading Catholic institution serving South Florida, the nation, and an increasingly global student population.

Advance the University's Strategic Vision

Working in partnership with the Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and the Archdiocese of Miami, the next president will provide clear and inspiring leadership for the University's next chapter. The president will champion the goals of the *Pursue Excellence* strategic plan while ensuring that institutional priorities remain aligned with the University's Catholic mission, values, and long-term aspirations. The successful candidate will build alignment across the University community, establish a shared vision for future growth and impact, and lead the continued implementation of strategic initiatives that strengthen academic quality, student success, operational effectiveness, and institutional distinction.

Champion St. Thomas University's Identity and Mission

As the chief steward of the University's mission, the president will articulate and advance the distinctive identity that defines St. Thomas University. The president will foster a campus culture grounded in faith, service, ethical leadership, human dignity, and a commitment to the common good while ensuring that the University remains welcoming and supportive of its diverse community. The president will effectively communicate the University's mission, accomplishments, and aspirations to further strengthen relationships with the Archdiocese of Miami, clergy, Catholic organizations, and faith-based partners while promoting the values that distinguish St. Thomas University within higher education.

Manage University Resources Responsibly and Expand Alternate Revenue Streams

While STU has enjoyed enrollment growth and a rising reputation, the next president will continue to manage university resources wisely, with an eye to the future, and facing the realities of contemporary higher education challenges in order to secure the university's sustainability well into the future.

To that end, the president will play a leading role in advancing philanthropic support and strengthening a culture of philanthropy across the institution. Working closely with advancement leaders, trustees, alumni, and donors, the president will cultivate relationships that generate new opportunities for investment in students, programs, scholarships, facilities, and institutional priorities. Additionally, the president will strengthen partnerships across the business, civic, educational, healthcare, legal, and nonprofit sectors to expand experiential learning opportunities, support workforce development, and advance the University's mission. Serving as the University's chief ambassador, the president will strengthen the visibility and reputation of St. Thomas University throughout South Florida and beyond.

Sustain Enrollment Growth and Enhance Student Success

Building upon a period of significant enrollment growth, the president will lead efforts to strengthen recruitment, retention, persistence, and graduation outcomes across all student populations. The next president will ensure that student success and financial sustainability remain at the center of institutional decision-making and will support initiatives that expand access, opportunity, completion, licensure, and career readiness. The president will work with academic and administrative leaders to create an exceptional student experience that supports intellectual development, personal growth, leadership formation, and professional achievement.

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Strengthen Academic Excellence and Innovation

The next president will elevate a culture of academic excellence that advances teaching, learning, scholarship, and professional preparation across the University's colleges, schools, and programs. The president will encourage innovation throughout the University while ensuring that academic offerings remain responsive to student interests, workforce needs, and emerging opportunities. Working collaboratively with faculty leadership, the president will promote interdisciplinary collaboration, support program development, and strengthen the University's reputation for providing transformative educational experiences across both the liberal arts and professional disciplines.

Foster a Positive and Engaged University Community

The president will foster a positive internal climate that encourages engagement, strengthens collaboration, and builds a culture of trust, transparency, and mutual respect. Through open communication, active listening, and meaningful opportunities for participation, the president will ensure that faculty, staff, and students feel heard, valued, and connected to the University's mission and priorities. The next president will build strong relationships across the institution, encourage collaboration across academic and administrative units, and communicate decisions and their rationale clearly. By modeling integrity, accountability, and respect for diverse perspectives, the president will cultivate a shared sense of purpose and a campus community in which people are empowered to contribute to the University's success.

Lead Through Growth and Transformation

The University has experienced substantial growth and momentum in recent years. The next president will guide St. Thomas University through its next phase of development, ensuring that growth is supported by strategic investments in academic quality, student support, organizational capacity, and institutional infrastructure. Working with academic and administrative leaders, the president will strengthen internal processes, modernize systems, and align staffing and resources so that operations scale effectively and meet the demands of a growing institution. This work will include identifying opportunities to streamline workflows, improve coordination across units, and strengthen the technology and physical infrastructure needed to deliver responsive, reliable services to students, faculty, and staff. The president will balance these investments with thoughtful financial stewardship, positioning the University to sustain excellence and expand its impact while remaining faithful to its mission and Catholic identity.



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Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

St. Thomas University seeks a president who will embrace STU's vision to be recognized as a leading Catholic University, distinguished by its innovative curriculum, core values that reflect its Catholic intellectual, spiritual, and religious tradition, and its vibrancy in Miami. The next president will champion an educational experience that prepares students not only for professional success, but also for lives of ethical leadership, thoughtful engagement with the most pressing issues of our time, and meaningful service to others. Grounded in the Catholic intellectual tradition, the president will affirm the University's commitment to academic excellence across disciplines, student success, respect for human dignity, and support of those who are economically disadvantaged or marginalized.

STU's next president will bring strong business acumen, a clear understanding of financials, and a track record of success in running a complex organization. The president must be a practicing Catholic, embracing a role, when called upon, as a spiritual leader. They will also be a passionate believer in the power of education to build better futures, elevate communities, and improve the quality of life through the implementation of high academic standards and practices. The successful candidate will embrace the formative role of Catholic higher education in developing graduates who are prepared to lead with integrity, compassion, and a commitment to the common good.

The new president will have the personal qualities necessary to be an effective ambassador, a trusted collaborator with external partners, and a talented fundraiser for St. Thomas University. A track record of successful philanthropic fundraising or a strong aptitude for learning that skill will be required.

The successful candidate will be an authentic representative of the university's mission and will have sufficient experience within higher education to earn the respect of the faculty. Importantly, the president will bring demonstrated success in such areas as strategic planning and financial management within a complex organization. Of critical importance will be the president's ability to identify and nurture talent and inspire leaders throughout the university to embrace and execute the university's strategic plan.

Given the critical role that enrollment plays in university budgets, the successful candidate will bring an understanding of contemporary enrollment trends, the ability to scale STU's recent growth, and enthusiasm for a vibrant student life, including an appreciation for athletics as part of the student experience, while maintaining academic quality and student success as the University's central priorities.

Additional qualities and characteristics include:

- Commitment to the University's Catholic mission and values, and supportive of Catholic traditions
- The ability to anticipate the future of higher education, and to remain flexible in an ever-changing landscape
- Demonstrated entrepreneurial mindset and creative problem-solving skills
- Ability to identify and pursue new strategies, strategic partnerships, and new opportunities that strengthen institutional sustainability and advance the University's mission
- A demonstrated record of supporting the growth and success of a diverse portfolio of academic programs; experience working with a law school or a strong understanding of legal education is highly desirable
- A sincere, visible interest in students
- Ability to lead change in a complex organization
- Aptitude for strategic communications, both internal and external to the university community
- Energy and enthusiasm

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- An understanding of and vision for the strategic role of innovation, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), in the future of higher education
- Ability to utilize data effectively to inform decisions
- A welcoming, transparent leadership style
- Curiosity about and deep interest in faculty and their intellectual contributions
- Attentiveness to the distinct needs of university staff
- Evidence of ability to hire, retain and delegate effectively to a senior leadership team
- Business acumen with financial experience at a complex organization
- Experience with or the ability to work effectively with a Board of Trustees
- A proven track record in fundraising, alumni, and community engagement
- A practicing Catholic
- An advanced degree



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About St. Thomas University

Overview

Founded in 1961 and rooted in a Catholic tradition that traces back to the Universidad de Santo Tomás de Villanueva in Havana, Cuba, St. Thomas University (STU) is a private Catholic university located in Miami Gardens, Florida. Sponsored by the Archdiocese of Miami, STU is the only Catholic archdiocesan-sponsored university in Florida and one of only eight diocesan-sponsored Catholic universities in the United States. The University's mission is to prepare students to become ethical leaders who transform their professions, communities, and the world through lives of purpose, service, and faith.

Today, St. Thomas University enrolls more than 8,700 students from 68 countries and nearly all 50 states and is supported by nearly 9000 faculty and staff. In recent years, STU has emerged as one of the fastest-growing Catholic universities in the nation, fueled by strategic investments in academic programs, student support, campus facilities, and community partnerships. Total enrollment grew from 6,427 students in Fall 2022 to 8,720 students in Fall 2025, while enrollment excluding dual-enrollment students increased from 4,344 to 6,225 students during the same period.

This growth has been accompanied by significant institutional advancement. The University has expanded its academic offerings, strengthened philanthropic support, added more than 600,000 square feet of new facilities, and enhanced the student experience through new residence halls, dining facilities, a student union, and the Gus Machado College of Business. STU's commitment to student outcomes has earned national recognition, including a No. 1 ranking for Social Mobility among Regional Universities in the South by *U.S. News & World Report*. More recently, the Carnegie Foundation named STU as an Opportunity University.

Guided by its aspiration to become "The Great Catholic University of the South," St. Thomas University continues to build on this momentum while remaining grounded in its Catholic mission, commitment to student success, and dedication to serving a diverse and globally connected community.

Mission and Catholic Identity

St. Thomas University is a Catholic university with a distinctive mission rooted in faith, intellectual inquiry, and service to others. As the University's mission states, *"St. Thomas is a Catholic university with rich cultural and international diversity committed to the academic and professional success of its students who become ethical leaders in our global community."*

STU views its Catholic identity as both a heritage and a call to action. The University states that it seeks to be a community that "teaches and worships in the Catholic tradition, and that makes actions on behalf of justice, mercy, forgiveness, peace, and love constitutive of our identity." The institution's Catholic identity is reflected in its commitment to educating the whole person, fostering ethical leadership, encouraging intellectual exploration, and preparing graduates to lead lives of purpose and service.

Central to the STU experience is a commitment to what the University describes as "transformative relationships" with one's spirit, the Church, humanity, those who are economically disadvantaged or marginalized, and the broader world. These commitments shape the institution's approach to teaching, scholarship, service, and student formation and help define its aspiration to develop ethical leaders who make a meaningful impact in their professions, communities, and society.

To learn more about STU's Catholic identity, visit: https://www.stu.edu/about-stu/catholic-identity.

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Strategic Vision

In 2025, St. Thomas University launched *Pursue Excellence*, a bold nine-year strategic vision designed to establish STU as the Great Catholic University of the South. The plan is organized into three distinct phases and provides a framework for sustained institutional growth, mission advancement, and academic distinction.

The inaugural phase, *Building to Excellence* (2025-2027), focuses on four strategic pillars:

- Excellence in Intellectual Discovery
- Excellence in Student Experiences
- Excellence in Strategic Partnerships
- Excellence in Operational Management

Collectively, these priorities seek to strengthen academic quality, elevate the student experience, expand partnerships throughout Florida and beyond, and ensure operational effectiveness and financial sustainability. Future phases will focus on sharpening institutional distinctiveness, strengthening competitive advantages, and positioning STU among the nation's leading Catholic universities in advance of its 2033 reaffirmation of accreditation.

Academics

St. Thomas University offers a comprehensive portfolio of undergraduate, graduate, professional, and doctoral programs designed to prepare students for leadership and service across a wide range of fields. The University's academic offerings have expanded significantly in recent years to meet evolving workforce needs and student demand, contributing to substantial enrollment growth and strengthening STU's impact throughout South Florida and beyond. The University combines a strong liberal arts foundation with professionally oriented programs that emphasize ethical leadership, experiential learning, and career readiness.

Academic programs are organized across the following schools and colleges:

- **Biscayne College for Liberal Arts and Social Sciences**, home to programs in the humanities, social sciences, criminal justice, communications, psychology, and related fields, including the renown Institute for Ethical Leadership
- **College of Law**, offering J.D., J.S.D., LL.M., and specialized legal education programs.
- **Gus Machado College of Business**, preparing leaders in accounting, finance, marketing, management, entrepreneurship, sports administration, and related business disciplines, including a new Bachelor of Arts in Fashion Merchandising and Design – the only Florida program of its kind accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.
- **College of Health Sciences & Technology,** offers undergraduate Baccalaureate degrees in biology, chemistry, health sciences, applied mathematics & data science, and computer science. A Master of Science degree can be obtained in big bata analytics, bioethics, cyber security, and health & medical sciences.
- **College of Nursing,** offers three undergraduate degrees to prepare students for nursing careers, a DNP-Nursing, and an online BSN to DNP degree track, along with five post-master's degree certificates for NPs to further their training.

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Accreditation

The main campus received a 10-year reaffirmation in December 2023 from The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, now known as the Commission on Colleges and Universities. The College of Law is fully accredited by the American Bar Association's Council of the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar. The ABA Council is the sole accreditor for J.D. programs recognized by Bar licensing authorities in all 50 states and the current sole law school accreditor approved by the U.S. Department of Education. The College of Law will have its next regularly scheduled ten-year sabbatical site inspection accreditation review during the 2028-2029 academic year.

Faculty

The main campus hosts 86 faculty, 77% of whom hold terminal degrees. The College of Law has 50 full-time faculty, 100% of whom hold a terminal degree.



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Enrollment

One of the most compelling aspects of St. Thomas University's story is its remarkable and sustained growth. Over the past several years, the University has experienced transformational increases in enrollment, academic program demand, degree production, campus infrastructure, and institutional visibility. This momentum reflects a strategic commitment to student success, workforce-relevant academic offerings, and mission-driven access to higher education. Drawing students from all 50 states and 68 countries, STU has emerged as one of the fastest-growing Catholic universities in the United States.

Since 2018, total enrollment has more than doubled, growing from approximately 4,300 students to more than 8,700 students in Fall 2025. Most notably, enrollment exclusive of dual-enrollment students increased from approximately 2,600 students in 2018 to more than 6,200 students in 2025, underscoring the strength of growth across the University's core academic enterprise. During the same period, annual degree conferrals more than doubled, reflecting STU's commitment not only to growth, but to student persistence, completion, and long-term success.

Growth has occurred across the institution and throughout the student lifecycle. Undergraduate enrollment remains the foundation of the University, while graduate, professional, online, and dual-enrollment populations have expanded significantly in recent years. The University has successfully diversified its enrollment portfolio while maintaining its commitment to personalized student support and educational access.

Several academic units have been particularly important drivers of this momentum:

- **Graduate Education:** Graduate enrollment increased substantially in recent years, reaching approximately 2,800 students in Fall 2025, fueled by growth in business, education, healthcare, leadership, and other professionally focused programs.
- **College of Law:** The law school has experienced significant growth and now enrolls more than 1,000 students, enhancing its position as a major contributor to the University's academic profile and regional impact.
- **Online and Professional Programs:** Expansion of flexible, workforce-aligned academic offerings has broadened STU's reach nationally and internationally, attracting working professionals and adult learners seeking career advancement.
- **Dual Enrollment:** Partnerships with regional high schools have resulted in substantial dual-enrollment growth, creating important pathways to college access and introducing new students to the University's mission and educational offerings.

Student Success

STU serves a diverse and increasingly national and international student population. More than half of students identify as Hispanic or Latino, roughly 24 percent identify as Black or African American, and students represent 68 countries around the world. The University enrolls substantial numbers of first-generation college students and remains deeply committed to educational access and economic mobility. Approximately 73 percent of first-time students identify as first-generation college students. The University's growth has been accompanied by significant increases in degree production, with annual degree completions rising from 703 in 2018-19 to 1,459 in 2024-25. During the same period, total academic program completions increased from 955 to 1,570. Graduate and professional programs have been especially important drivers of this growth, supporting the University's expanding regional and national reputation. STU's commitment to student success and transformative outcomes has earned national recognition. The University is ranked first among Regional Universities in the South for Social Mobility by U.S. News & World Report, reflecting its success in elevating the educational and economic prospects of students from historically underserved backgrounds. More recently, the Carnegie Foundation named STU as an Opportunity University.

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Student Life

Student clubs and organizations are the heartbeat of co-curricular life at STU. They help students grow socially, intellectually, and spiritually. The university provides a broad range of opportunities for involvement on the main campus, including a vibrant Student Government Association, a number of active pre-professional clubs, academic and honors societies, affinity groups, and service activities. The College of Law has an additional 54 active Student Organizations. Students can also find academic support at the Bobcat Academic Achievement Center.

Competing as the Bobcats, STU sponsors 34 varsity sports and is recognized as one of the most active athletic programs in the NAIA. Guided by the values of integrity, sportsmanship, responsibility, and servant leadership, the University's athletics program supports the development of student-athletes as scholars, competitors, and community leaders.



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Miami

Located in Miami Gardens between Miami and Fort Lauderdale, St. Thomas University sits within one of the most diverse and internationally connected regions in the United States. South Florida's identity has been shaped by generations of residents with roots in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, Europe, and elsewhere, creating communities where different cultures, languages, and traditions are part of everyday life. This diversity is reflected throughout the region's neighborhoods, businesses, civic organizations, and institutions.

The area's year-round warm climate and proximity to the Atlantic Ocean contribute to an active outdoor lifestyle. Residents enjoy access to beaches, parks, waterways, and natural areas, including Biscayne Bay, the Everglades, and the Florida Keys. For many, South Florida offers a balance between the opportunities of a major metropolitan area and the amenities associated with coastal living. Miami is also a center for arts, culture, entertainment, and international commerce. Distinct neighborhoods such as Coral Gables, Coconut Grove, Little Havana, and Little Haiti reflect the history and cultural influences that have shaped the region. Museums, performing arts venues, professional sports, and community festivals contribute to a vibrant civic and cultural landscape, while nearby Hard Rock Stadium hosts major sporting and entertainment events in Miami Gardens year-round.

As a gateway to Latin America and the Caribbean, South Florida plays an important role in global business, healthcare, finance, technology, tourism, and trade. The region's international character creates opportunities for partnership, engagement, and collaboration across sectors. For St. Thomas University, this setting provides a natural extension of its mission and offers students, faculty, and staff access to a community defined by diversity, opportunity, and global connections.

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Procedure for Candidacy

All applications, nominations, and inquiries are invited. Applications should include, as separate documents, a CV or resume and a letter of interest addressing the themes in this profile.

WittKieffer is assisting St. Thomas University in this search. For fullest consideration, candidate materials should be received by January 8, 2027.

Application materials should be submitted using WittKieffer's **candidate portal**.

Nominations and inquiries can be directed to:

Melody Rose, Ph.D., Alejandra Gillette-Teran, and Sarah Seavey

StThomasPresident@wittkieffer.com

St. Thomas University is an equal opportunity employer committed to a professional, inclusive environment free from unlawful discrimination and harassment. Employment decisions are based on institutional needs and merit, and the University prohibits discrimination or harassment based on any characteristic protected by applicable federal, state, or local law, including race, color, religion, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, ancestry, age, disability, genetic information, military status, marital or familial status, and other legally protected statuses.

Consistent with applicable law and the University's Catholic identity and religious mission, St. Thomas University reserves its rights regarding the maintenance of Catholic values and consideration of the Catholic faith in employment. This policy applies to all terms and conditions of employment and to University-related work, activities, travel, meetings, and events.

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