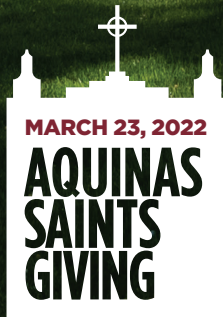


CANOPY

A PUBLICATION OF THE AQUINAS COLLEGE OFFICE OF ADVANCEMENT



FROM TIP OFF TO TAX
TIME: MEET SENIOR
JUSTIN LARY



MARCH 23, 2022
**AQUINAS
SAINTS
GIVING**

5 QUESTIONS WITH ALUMNA
BETH LAUX, ED.D. '02



CANOPY

SPRING 2022

Canopy is a publication of the Aquinas College Office of Advancement. Whether you are near or far from Aquinas College, we want you to know about the great things happening in our Saints community under the enduring canopy of our beautiful campus.

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AQUINAS COLLEGE

1700 FULTON ST. E
GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49506

Aquinas College is an equal opportunity employer and an inclusive educational community rooted in the Catholic Dominican tradition. Aquinas College provides a liberal arts education with a global perspective, emphasizes career preparation focused on leadership and service to others, and fosters a commitment to lifelong learning dedicated to the pursuit of truth and the common good. Aquinas College values:
Faith, Learning, Service, and Community.

From Our Vice President for Advancement

Dear Alumni and Friends,

Transitions can bring about feelings of unease, even as they offer new and exciting opportunities. While the search for the ninth president of Aquinas College is underway and Provost Steve Germic serves as the interim president, I've witnessed a spark in my conversations with faculty, donors, Board members, alumni, staff and friends of the College. Perhaps especially during this time of transition, remarkable things are happening at Aquinas and a bright future is taking shape.

We are delivering on our mission to prepare students for careers and lives of meaning and success. This time of year is exciting as we get to see the fruits of that labor and celebrate our students' accomplishments at Commencement.

Follow the College on social media to learn more about several of our dynamic graduating Saints. They are impressive servant leaders and we can't wait to see all the places they will go.

There is something very distinctive about our students. And this year, our Advancement team is keenly focused on supporting them directly. Our fundraising efforts are centered on student scholarships, specifically raising critical dollars for the Aquinas Annual Scholarship Fund.

100% of our incoming students receive scholarship support. All scholarships each year total \$23 million. Our endowed scholarships cover only a fraction of this need, which is why your annual generosity is so essential.

In addition to the Aquinas Annual Scholarship Fund, we are launching the Annual *Athletic* Scholarship Fund. I hope you will support one or both of these important scholarships on our **March 23 Saintsgiving Day!**

Thank you for all of your support of Aquinas College and her Saints!



Gina Covert, CAP
VICE PRESIDENT FOR ADVANCEMENT

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

WEDNESDAY MARCH 23



On SaintsGiving, we ask all Saints — alumni, faculty, staff, students, parents and friends — to make a donation to support Aquinas College. Why? Because together we can do more! This year, every dollar raised will support student scholarships. More at aquinas.edu/saintsgiving.

SATURDAY, MAY 7:

COMMENCEMENT AT AQUINAS COLLEGE

We will be celebrating the class of 2022 and welcoming them to our alumni family! Please pray for these graduates that they may be blessed as they embark on this exciting next phase of their journey. More at aquinas.edu/commencement.

THURSDAY, MAY 12:

OLLI CELEBRATION

5 TO 8 P.M.

THOUSAND OAKS GOLF CLUB

OLLI at Aquinas College is celebrating 48 years of lifelong learning and honoring John and Micki Benz, recipients of the 2022 Norbert J. Hruby Emeritus Award, for their ongoing leadership, generosity and service to our community. More at aquinas.edu/olli.

MONDAY, MAY 16:

PETER M. WEGE PRO-AM GOLF TOURNAMENT

8:30 A.M. TO 4 P.M.

THOUSAND OAKS GOLF CLUB

Don't miss this exclusive opportunity to golf alongside the pros while raising critical scholarship dollars to support our AQ Saints. Limited sponsorship opportunities are available. Reserve your spot today by contacting Greg MacAleenan at (616) 632-2816 or mcaleenang@aquinas.edu.

SEPTEMBER 15-18:

HOMECOMING AT AQUINAS COLLEGE

This extended weekend will have something for everyone: Welcome Home Reception & Alumni Awards Celebration, Coach Terry Bocian Athletic Hall of Fame, main stage tent and activities, special reunions and socials, Mass, athletic events and more! More at aquinas.edu/homecoming.

Keeping Up with the AQ Alumni Association

The Aquinas College Alumni Association is led by the Alumni Association Leadership Council (AALC). Working with our Alumni Relations team, the AALC hosts a variety of events each year locally, in other Michigan locations and around the country. If you would like to partner with the AALC to host a gathering in your area, let us know! Stay up to date on the latest at aquinas.edu/alumni or follow the Aquinas College Alumni & Friends page on Facebook or @aqalumni on Instagram.

Interested in being part of the AALC? Nominations are currently being accepted. Email alumni@aquinas.edu to learn more.

Alumni Association Leadership Council

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3Things to Know

Provost, Dean of Faculty and Interim President Stephen Germic

**Presidential search underway**

With feedback from over 150 members of our community, the search for Aquinas College's next President is well underway. Thank you to Search Committee Co-Chairs, and members of the Board of Trustees, Sam Cummings and John Lowery, for leading this charge, along with the Presidential Search Committee. The Committee is working to provide three candidates to the Board of Trustees who will ultimately make the final decision. Please find a listing of Search Committee members, the Presidential Search Prospectus and the latest updates on our website at aquinas.edu/presidentialsearch.

Changes to academics

Aquinas has a long tradition of offering students an exceptional educational experience and we are on the cusp of taking that to an entirely new level. Work is underway to shift the College to a new four-credit model that will ultimately allow for more applied, engaged and experiential learning for our students. I am so proud of our faculty for voting in favor of this new model by a landslide. Change can be difficult and making significant changes to the way one teaches is no small thing. That said, our faculty sees the benefit of this truly distinctive and learner-centered model and they are committed to serving our students well. More to come in future communications!

Commencement 2022

After the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic the last two years, we are very much looking forward to returning to a more typical Commencement celebration for this year's graduates. A Baccalaureate Mass and Commencement Ceremony for the class of 2022 will take place on Saturday, May 7. We are immensely proud of these graduates and their perseverance.



**A FOREVER GIFT
FOR MOM AND DAD**

As part of Aquinas College's 125th-anniversary celebration in 2012, there was an initiative to grow endowed scholarships. Kate Davis, who works for the College's Office of Advancement, saw many families creating scholarships and was struck with an idea. She and her sister Laura agreed to work together to establish a scholarship in honor of their parents—a kind and generous gift that keeps giving.

Kate and Laura's parents, Joe and Kathy Westdorp, graduated from Grand Rapids Catholic Central High School. Joe received a full-ride scholarship to attend Aquinas College, while Kathy headed off to the University of Michigan. She transferred to Aquinas her junior year.

Both music majors, Kathy remembers being on the third floor of the Academic Building in 1959, where the music department was housed at the time, when Joe asked her on their first date. "My Dad always said that if she had turned him down, he wouldn't have asked again. It took so much courage. Thank goodness she said yes," Kate joked.

Joe and Kathy left Aquinas just credits shy of graduating to get married. They worked together at the Basilica of St. Adalbert's, where Joe was the organist and adult choir leader for nearly 60 years, while Kathy led the children's choirs. They raised four wonderful daughters. Kathy sang with various organizations in town, including the Grand Rapids Opera, and also taught music in the public school system and at West Catholic High School. Joe worked for Spartan stores. Eventually, they both returned to Aquinas to finish their degrees, Kathy first in 1980 and Joe later in 1999.

"The Catholic education we received at Aquinas shaped our lives and certainly helped us in our careers," Kathy said. "Being a small school, the relationships were so important. It was a family. Many of the Dominican Sisters were our classmates and friends."

With Aquinas playing such a special role in their lives, it means a lot to know that through the Joseph A. and Kathleen M. Driza Westdorp Family Scholarship that Kate and Laura established, their names will be part of the College forever.

"It was a stretch for us to make this gift, but seeing how excited they were, it felt really good," Kate said. "We told them we want to do this in honor of you, but it will be Christmas, birthdays and other presents for a few years," Laura added.

"We just couldn't believe that they would do something so big for us," Kathy said.

Since establishing the scholarship, other family members have joined in making gifts to the scholarship to help it grow. And when Joe sadly passed away last year, friends and loved ones made contributions to the Fund in his memory.

"Someone helped our dad come to Aquinas on a scholarship," Laura said. "All these pieces fell together to form them [Joe and Kathy], and they formed who we are. Now we have a chance to help someone else."

"I love hearing the students' stories. They are so thankful for the scholarships. It really touches me to know that we are making a difference and it will go on for years to come," Kathy said. "What you give, you get back. It is all in God's plan."

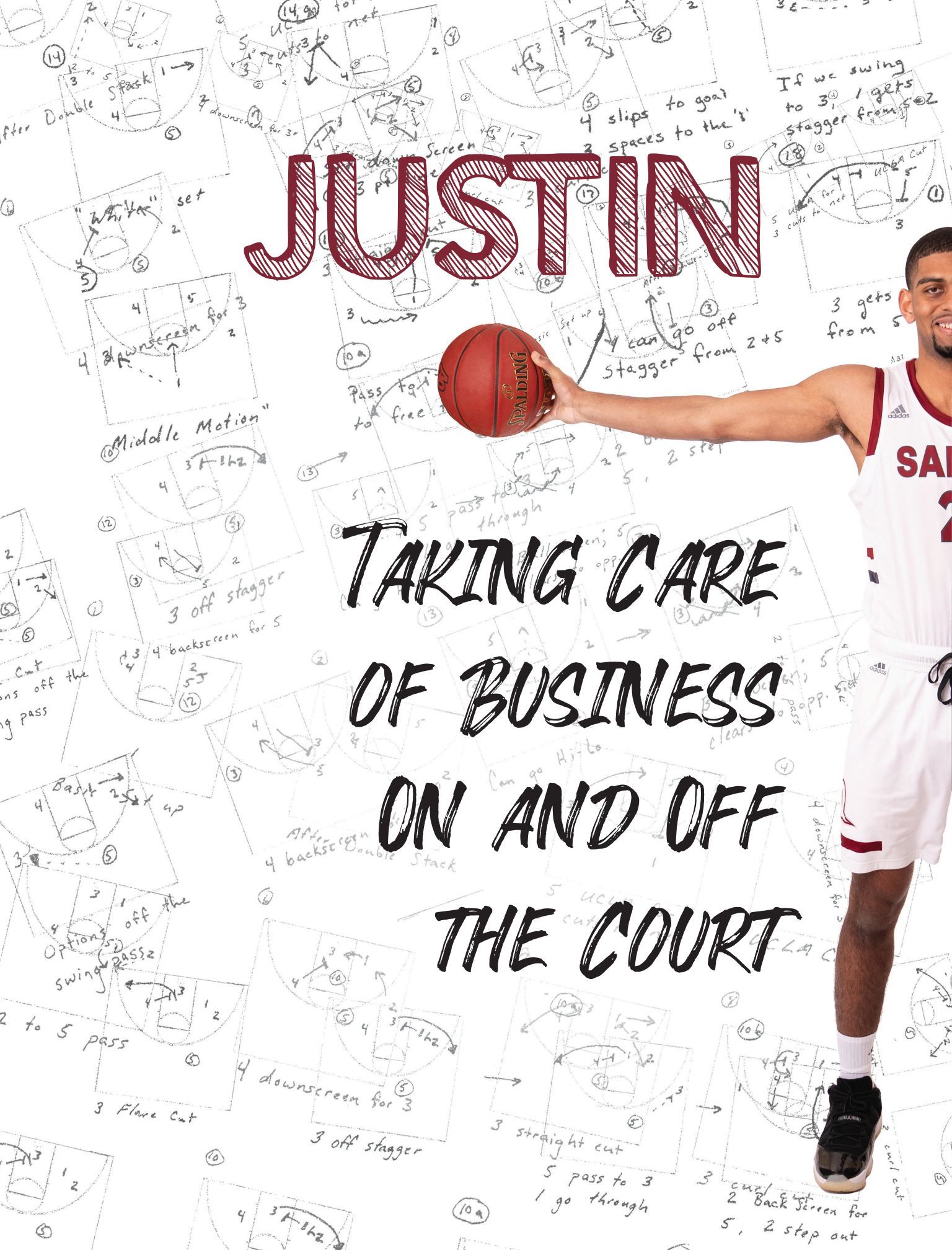
"SOMEONE HELPED OUR DAD COME TO AQUINAS ON A SCHOLARSHIP," LAURA SAID. "ALL THESE PIECES FELL TOGETHER TO FORM THEM [JOE AND KATHY], AND THEY FORMED WHO WE ARE. NOW WE HAVE A CHANCE TO HELP SOMEONE ELSE."



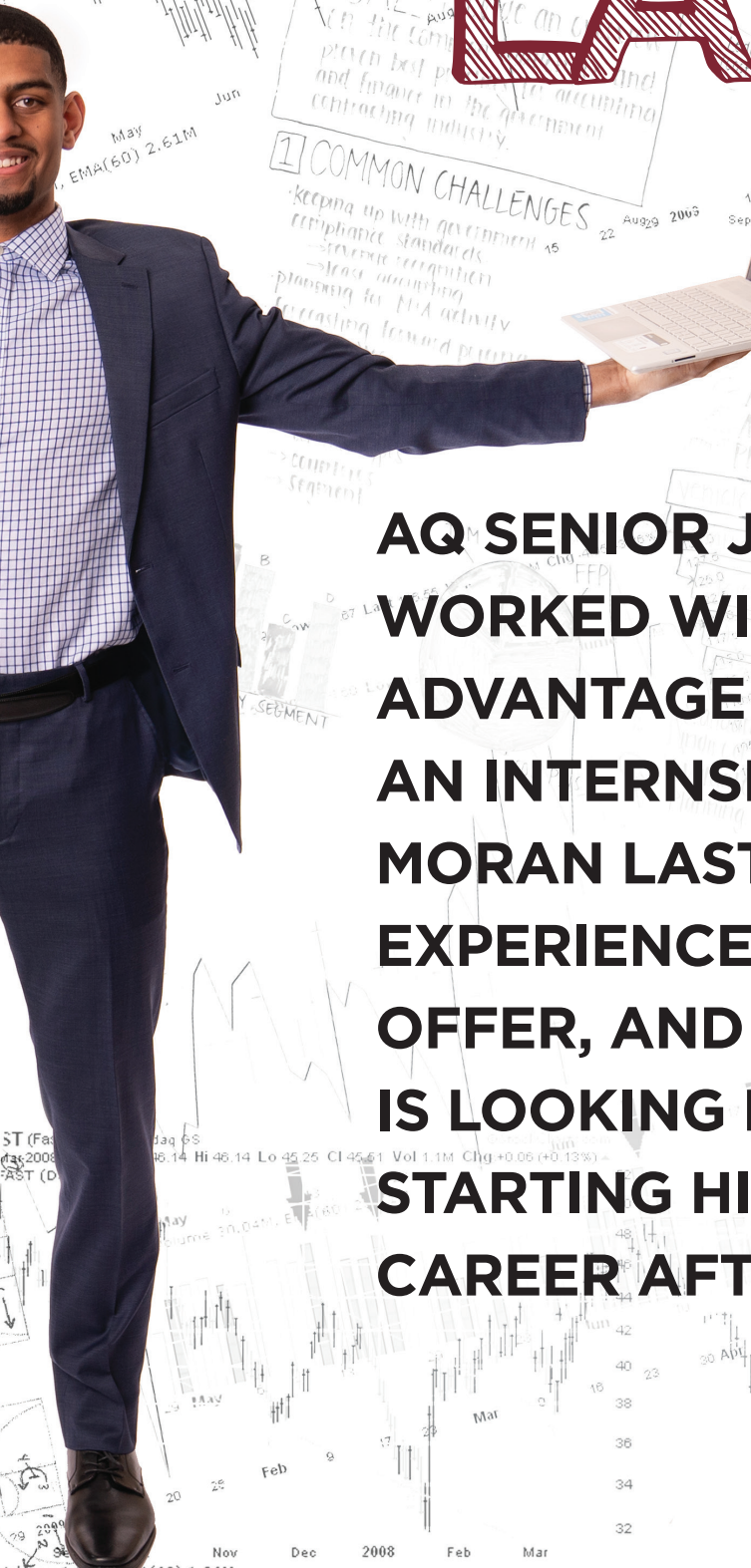
JUSTIN



TAKING CARE
OF BUSINESS
ON AND OFF
THE COURT



LARY



**AQ SENIOR JUSTIN LARY
WORKED WITH THE
ADVANTAGE CENTER TO LAND
AN INTERNSHIP AT PLANTE
MORAN LAST SUMMER. THAT
EXPERIENCE LED TO A JOB
OFFER, AND NOW JUSTIN
IS LOOKING FORWARD TO
STARTING HIS ACCOUNTING
CAREER AFTER GRADUATION.**

JUSTIN, WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO AQUINAS?

My brother attended Aquinas, but it was really basketball that brought me here. We have a great team and culture. I had planned to study biology—my parents wanted me to be a doctor. My roommate was studying marketing and had a passion for stocks. I became interested in the financial markets and decided to change my focus. I am double majoring in accounting and business.

WHAT'S IT LIKE BEING A STUDENT ATHLETE?

Athletics is a family. It's been a whole new experience—continuing to play a sport I love, traveling, meeting alumni and donors. Most importantly winning this year has created a great memorable experience.

The level of difficulty and the time you have to put into your classes has developed me as a young man. You need grit to go from practice to a 6-10 p.m. class, and then get up and do it all again early the next morning. It takes a lot of devotion and discipline. It's not easy, but it's worth it.

HOW HAS SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORT HELPED YOU?

I received two donor-funded scholarships and a basketball scholarship. I wouldn't be here without that support. They created an opportunity for me to be part of the community and access opportunities outside of campus, like my internship. Scholarships were the foundation that helped mold me as a young man and jumpstart my career.

YOUR PARENTS ARE YOUR BIGGEST FANS.**WHAT DOES THEIR SUPPORT MEAN TO YOU?**

The support from my parents has been everything. They've pushed me through hard times. Their advice and mentorship means a lot. No one gets through college alone. Also, I love being able to look up at a game and not have to worry about whether or not they are in the stands. They're always there.

HOW HAS AQUINAS IMPACTED YOU AS A PERSON?

Aquinas has made me a more well-rounded individual—academically and socially. I value the relationships I've developed with my professors. I was in Professor Cantley's office recently watching sports videos. I don't think I'd have those close personal relationships at a larger institution.

Congratulations to Justin and the entire Class of 2022! **IT'S GREAT TO BE A SAINT.**



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A SAINT



Name: Tiffany Gonzalez

Year: Junior

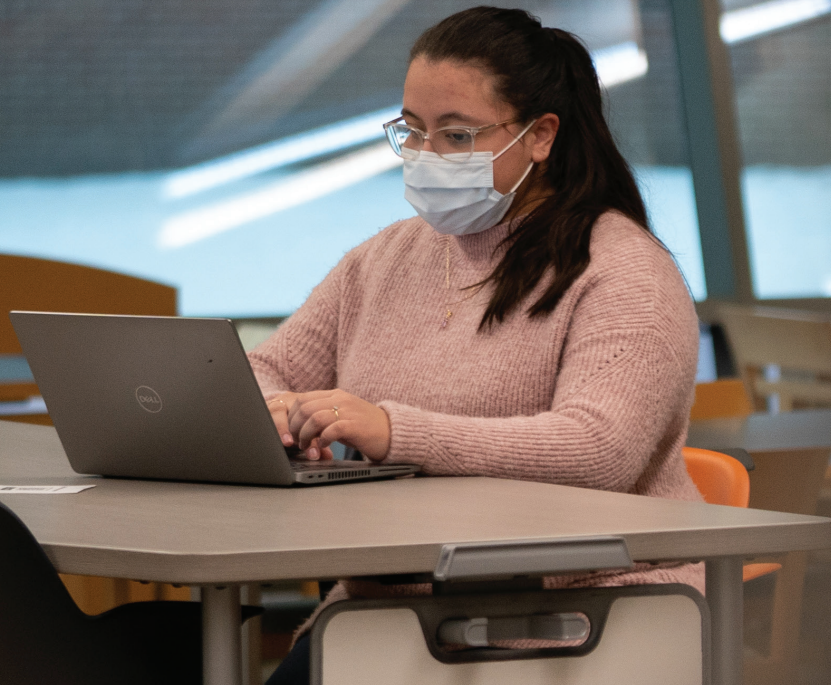
Major: Business Administration with a Marketing minor

TIFFANY'S EXPERIENCE AS A TRANSFER STUDENT.

Tiffany started her post-secondary journey at Grand Rapids Community College and applied to Aquinas in 2020. At first, she felt nervous about making connections here, but that soon disappeared. "I love that this is a community-driven campus. Everyone on campus is friendly, open, supportive and caring. It's like being a part of a really big family," Tiffany said.

LEARNING IN AND OUT OF THE CLASSROOM.

With the help of the Advantage Center, Tiffany secured a fantastic internship this year at Steelcase focused on product marketing for their education/learning environment team. She's involved in product development, studying how students use products in hybrid learning environments. "This is a hands-on experience that I don't think I would get anywhere else. My work is being used on the corporate website and has been presented to the Board of Directors," Tiffany said. That's exciting!





SCHOLARSHIP HELPS BALANCE SCHOOL/WORK/MOM LIFE.

Tiffany is the recipient of a scholarship called Saints for Life. It provides scholarship support to students who are continuing their education while also managing the role of being a parent. Tiffany's daughter, Camila, just celebrated her first birthday.

WHAT DO YOU DO FOR FUN?

Outside of the classroom, Tiffany enjoys spending time with her family and her fiancé, who is also an AQ Saint outside of the classroom. She loves dancing to Spanish music, swimming and being outdoors.





After graduating from Aquinas, Beth continued her education at the University of Toledo and then at Northeastern University. Today, she is the Dean of International Programs at Pepperdine University.

Giving Back to AQ

5 Questions with Beth Laux, Ed.D. '02

In each issue of Canopy, we feature an alumna or alumnus who has given back to Aquinas College with financial support. Beth Laux set up a monthly recurring gift for political science, and when the College shares a need, she generously responds. Beth knows that giving back can make a world of difference to a student, a family and even a community.

1. How did you choose to attend AQ?

I discovered Aquinas at a college fair. I had already decided to go to a university in Ohio, but the representative from Aquinas was really enthusiastic. The more I learned about the College, the more I felt that it aligned with my values. So I decided to attend Aquinas instead.

2. How did your experience at Aquinas shape who you are today?

Aquinas played a critical role in my faith journey. My experiences with Campus Ministry and the College community helped solidify my identity as a Catholic woman. It helped me examine what I believe and why, and that motivated me to share my faith with others. I spent two years as a missionary in Central America, and I am still an active Catholic who volunteers in her church and community.

3. In what ways did your education at Aquinas prepare you for your current role?

During my time at Aquinas, I studied in Costa Rica and Spain. Those experiences profoundly impacted how I understood the world and my place in it. I became a better communicator and negotiator. The experiences made me more creative and resilient, too. After graduation, I started working in international education, and 20 years later I'm still helping universities create cultural experiences for students.

4. What do you think is the most unique/special/significant aspect of Aquinas College?

When I arrived at Aquinas, I didn't have a lot of confidence. I was very quiet and had a lot of self-doubts. But the faculty at Aquinas took me under their wing. They helped me build my confidence and challenged me to become more than I thought was possible. That relationship between faculty and students is really special.

5. As an alumna, why is giving back to the College with your time, talent and treasure important to you?

As a first generation college student, the impact of my education went beyond myself as an individual. It impacted my entire family. The knowledge and experiences that I gained at Aquinas opened social, economic, and political doors that had been closed to my family for generations. I wanted to make those opportunities accessible to other families, and giving to the College is my way of doing that.

LET'S CONNECT

If you are an alumnus who wants to explore ways to get more involved, we'd like to hear from you! Drop us a line today at alumni@aquinas.edu.

AQUINAS COLLEGE

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