

# CANOPY

A PUBLICATION OF THE AQUINAS COLLEGE OFFICE OF ADVANCEMENT

Issue  
One

3 THINGS TO KNOW  
FROM PRESIDENT  
KEVIN G. QUINN

HELPING STUDENTS  
AFFECTED BY  
COVID-19

QUESTIONS WITH  
ALUMNUS  
ALEXANDER WILSON '09





# CANOPY

FALL 2020

*Canopy is a new publication of the Aquinas College Office of Advancement. While we are apart, we want to keep the doors of Aquinas College open to you and share some of 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  
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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 Saints Community,

I hope this finds you and your loved ones well. This year has been anything but expected, yet at Aquinas College, the challenges have also brought new opportunities.

Like everyone, we've been tested, but our Saints family is strong. Our values have guided our work and decisions. We've locked arms to move forward in the best interest of our students and our Saints community. Although I have been at Aquinas for less than a year, I feel fortunate to serve here during this particular season.

I am especially thankful for President Quinn's leadership and wisdom, always challenging us to consider, "What would the Dominican Sisters do?" This question keeps us grounded in our values as we respond to issues related to racial inequities and the ongoing pandemic. I am also grateful for my fellow cabinet members who have led with strength, creativity and great compassion. To this dynamic team, we welcomed Provost and Dean of Faculty, Dr. Stephen Germic, on July 1. In the short time Provost Germic has been with us, he's proven to be a valuable asset to Aquinas, serving on our AQ Opens Task Force and managing the many contingencies of this new academic year.

In moments of reflection, I am humbled and grateful for the outpouring of support we've received from our alumni and friends. So many have asked, "How can I help?" and then followed up with support and action. The genuine care demonstrated is a testament to this special place. My team and I are heartened and inspired to do more good. It's great to be a Saint!

Stay well and be blessed,



Gina Covert, CAP®  
VICE PRESIDENT FOR ADVANCEMENT



Fatima Bawah was a member of the 2020 Aquinas College Homecoming Court.

## *Saints Together Fund* Helping Students Affected by COVID-19

In April, when we launched the Saints Together Fund to support students facing hardships resulting from COVID-19, many alumni and friends of Aquinas College generously responded.

The Fund has received over 200 requests from students seeking help with rent, utilities, school supplies, groceries and tuition.

Fatima Bawah is a senior at Aquinas, majoring in psychology and theatre with a music minor.

“I am a student ambassador and I work in the Student Activities & Orientation Office, as well. I like helping people and showing other students and especially students of color that this is a great school and that you can thrive here,” Fatima said.

When campus closed in the spring, Fatima felt the impact. “We weren’t able to work, so my

income disappeared. The money I make working in the spring and summer is what I use to pay tuition in the fall,” Fatima said.

Fatima found summer work off-campus, and in July, she was called back to her on-campus position. She was able to save up some, but it wasn’t enough. “I considered taking the semester off,” Fatima said.

An email to students changed things. The message was to share news of the Saints Together Fund and new scholarship funds. Fatima applied and received an award to help cover tuition, food and rent.

To those who donated to the Fund, Fatima said, “I may not know who you are, but you are part of why I am able to finish my degree here. Thank you. And I hope I can return the favor to someone else at Aquinas someday.”

## Special CARES Act Tax Benefits for Giving

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, enacted this past March, was designed to help address the economic hardships many are facing due to COVID-19. The Act includes several incentives for charitable giving.

### **NEW CARES ACT TAX INCENTIVES**

#### **For those who take the standard deduction**

Take a charitable deduction of up to \$300. Imagine if every alumni and supporter of Aquinas gave \$300, or whatever amount they can afford, this fall? Such support would have a tremendous impact on the College and our students!

#### **For those who itemize their deductions**

Cash contributions to qualified nonprofits, like Aquinas College, can be deducted up to 100% of adjusted gross income for the 2020 calendar year, creating a unique opportunity to make transformational gifts this year.

#### **For corporations**

The annual limit on deductions has been raised from 10% to 25% of taxable income.

### **LET’S CONNECT**

*To talk about giving to Aquinas College and explore the type of impact you’d like to make, please contact us at  
(616) 632-2820 or  
advancement@aquinas.edu*

3Things to Know

## President Kevin G. Quinn

**Welcome to Dr. Stephen Germic, provost and dean of faculty**

We are extremely pleased to welcome Provost Germic as an official Aquinas College Saint. Steve has a history of transformative academic leadership that has led to impressive growth, and his collaboration with faculty has strengthened and enhanced student experiences. Before joining Aquinas, Steve was provost and academic vice president of Rocky Mountain College in Billings, Montana.

**New Anti-Racism Committee**

This summer, I asked Alicia Lloyd, director of the Center for Diversity, Inclusion and Equity and special advisor to the president, to form a committee representing all facets of our Saints community to assess how we can strengthen anti-racism on campus. I charged the committee to begin with our mission and Dominican values as their compass. Alicia led off efforts by providing new training for resident advisors and faculty. Next, committee workgroups will develop recommendations for engaging five college constituencies: leadership, faculty, staff, students and alumni.

**Fall Athletic Competitions Postponed**

In conjunction with the Wolverine-Hoosier Athletic Conference and the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics, the Aquinas athletic department postponed fall sports competition until spring, 2021. Our teams will be allowed to practice and condition this fall. This was a difficult but necessary decision for the health and safety of our student athletes and the entire Saints community. New information is available almost daily and could impact this decision. Visit [aqsaints.com](http://aqsaints.com) for updates. I'm proud of our athletes and their sacrifice for the greater good. This is what it means to be an Aquinas College Saint!



*“My family and Aquinas are the two factors that made the most difference in who I am.”*

Dr. N. Patrick Hennessey is a New York City-based physician specializing in dermatology, where he’s led a boutique practice and served on the clinical faculty of New York University for four decades. Additionally, he’s served as primary care physician for patients living with HIV for 25 years.

He is also a proud graduate of Aquinas College. Last year, Patrick joined our Contributing to More campaign cabinet in a key leadership role for the medical and science division.

“As you enter the later stages of your life, you reflect back on your experiences with more perspective. It has become more apparent to me that who I am and what I’ve enjoyed in life has come from the experiences I had at Aquinas,” Patrick said. “Now, I feel this responsibility to contribute to people like me having similar opportunities.”

Patrick was raised in a traditional Catholic family in Troy, Michigan. His parents were the first generation to leave their family farm and move to the city to pursue work in the auto industry.

When it came time for college, Patrick set his sights on attending a big-name university. His family and high school advisor conspired to direct him towards Aquinas. After visiting campus on a beautiful day in May, he agreed to try it for two years on the condition he could then transfer.

During those two years, he fell for all the things that make Aquinas a special place—the campus, the people, the small class sizes, and the instructors who got to know him, helped him learn who he was, and challenged him. “It was the perfect place for me to be. I think a big city would have swallowed me up,” Patrick said.

He finished his first degree in history in three years. After one late-night out with a friend, he returned to his apartment and wrote a note that read, “January 26, 1969, 5 a.m., This is when I decided to become a doctor.” The next day, he changed all of his courses and earned a second degree from Aquinas in biology. From there, he went on to medical school at Michigan State University.

Reflecting on his career, Patrick says it was his Aquinas liberal arts education that made him the type of physician he is today. Science is essential to the liberal arts, but he suggests the inverse is more relevant—that a liberal arts education is vital to medicine and science.

“Seeing a patient presents an opportunity to influence that person forever, to teach them about the interaction of healthcare providers and themselves and the partnership that exists. It’s the people, not the diagnosis,” Patrick said. “A place like Aquinas that emphasizes people fosters that idea. People are the priority.”

Through his involvement in the Contributing to More campaign, Patrick hopes to ensure this kind of learning environment remains available for generations to come.

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**JOIN US!**

*If you would like to learn more about ways to invest in the sciences and liberal arts at Aquinas, please call (616) 632-2820. We’d love to offer you a tour of Albertus Magnus Hall of Science and share the remarkable successes of the Contributing to More campaign.*

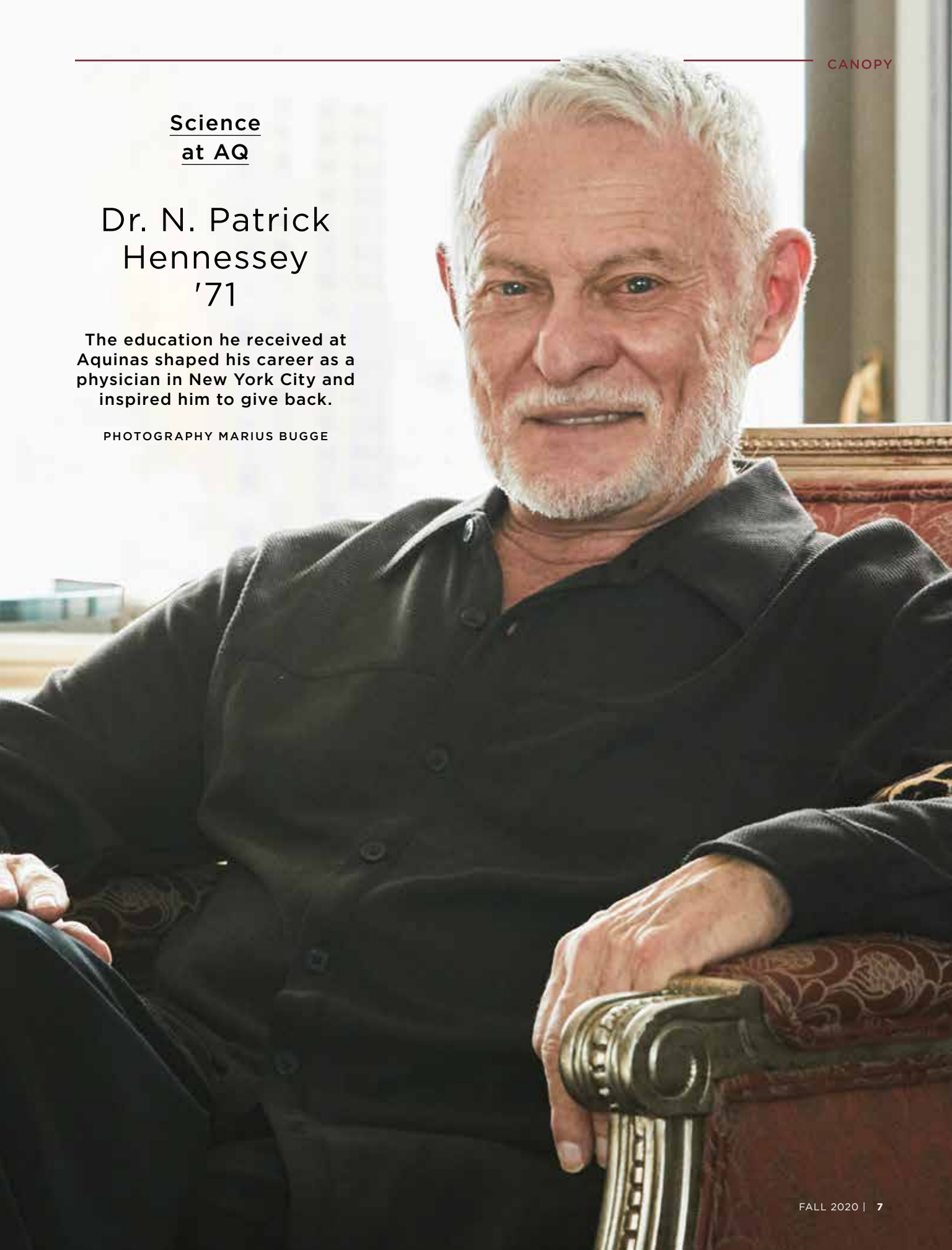


Science  
at AQ

Dr. N. Patrick  
Hennessey  
'71

The education he received at Aquinas shaped his career as a physician in New York City and inspired him to give back.

PHOTOGRAPHY MARIUS BUGGE







Alex and Emily Wilson live in the Chicago area with their young son Isaac.



## Giving Back to AQ

# 5 Questions with Alumnus Alexander Wilson '09

In each issue of Canopy, we will feature an alum who has given back to Aquinas College with financial support. *Alex Wilson '09* recently set up a monthly recurring donation to benefit the College.

PHOTOGRAPHY DAN SOCIE

### 1. What brought you to Aquinas?

I was a pretty confused 17-year-old. I wanted to get out and start my own life, but I didn't know where to go or how to get there. A close friend at the time told me about Aquinas. I did some research and talked to my family, who thought that a smaller school would be a good community for me. They were right.

#### LET'S CONNECT

*If you are an alum 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](mailto:alumni@aquinas.edu) or join our online directory at [aqsaintsnetwork.com](http://aqsaintsnetwork.com)*

### 2. How did your experience at Aquinas shape the person you are today?

When I first arrived at Aquinas, I was so nervous that I wouldn't make friends and make it (academically), that I went behind Hruby Hall and threw up.

I remember making my way through the first semester. My professors cared about how I did; they wanted me to succeed. Everyone was so incredibly gracious, so at ease and kind that I felt a deep responsibility to push myself more and more over time. This effort toward becoming a better person, of finding grace and forgiving others and myself — Aquinas embodied all of this, and, I hope, filled me with some of its virtue.

### 3. What do you think is the most significant aspect of Aquinas College?

So often in adulthood, we're put on a kind of treadmill. The speed increases, but we don't get anywhere. There's this elusive promise that by working harder, trying more, being faster, smarter and quicker, we will find joy, not only for ourselves but also for everyone around us.

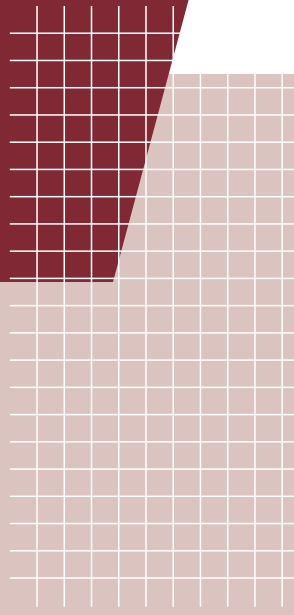
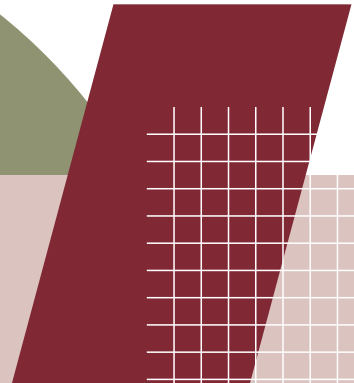
Aquinas wasn't worried about the treadmill. It was a bastion of mindfulness, patience and love. It emphasized charity, learning and compassion. It taught the joy in giving and the blessing of community. These things are so treasured at Aquinas and impart significance on those who go there.

### 4. Do you have a favorite Aquinas memory that you'd be willing to share?

It has to be the night I arrived in Barcelona to study abroad during my junior year. It was my first time to Europe, and I started to feel like the world was shifting from dull grey to Technicolor—like possibilities were opening up. I remember eating tapas and having a terrible beer in a standing room-only bar. Then we stepped out onto the street and the whole city was a party. There was this moment where I felt young, perfectly placed and truly alive.

### 5. What words of encouragement would you share with other alumni considering making a gift to the College?

If you've been blessed to have enough to give back, then you should. Aquinas alums go on to lead businesses, get elected to office and serve as public defenders. We were taught in an institution that's so selfless, it's easy to overlook how much it becomes a part of who we are. The world needs Aquinas, and we need to do all we can to ensure it carries on into the future.



Saints  
in  
Action

## Donating Face Masks for the AQ Community

For *Marquise Blakeslee-Ringer '01*, attending Aquinas College was an unexpected gift—and one she almost didn't accept.





Growing up in a small mid-Michigan town, Marquise often visited her local bookstore where the owner allowed her to purchase books on installment, paying 30 to 40 cents a time. She read all of *Anne of Green Gables* this way.

After high school, Marquise took a full-time job at a foundry while enrolling in community college. A series of unfortunate events resulted in her dropping out of school. Friends attending Aquinas College encouraged her to apply, but she couldn't see how she would afford it. Learning of this, the bookstore owner from her childhood stepped in with the gift of a lifetime.

"She paid for me to go to Aquinas. I refused her offer at first, but a friend marched me down there and said, 'You are going to accept this and you are going to school,'" Marquise said.

In a move that changed her life, she accepted the offer and started at Aquinas, where she majored in political science with a minor in German. "I was a serious student and very involved. I blossomed at Aquinas. I had this beautiful gift and I wasn't going to waste it," Marquise said.

Today, Marquise lives with her husband and two young children in Fort Meade, Maryland. She's earned two master's degrees and joined the Army as an officer with the help of a recommendation letter from one of her favorite professors, Doc Durham. She has traveled the world, lived in too many places to list and now works for the government in cybersecurity.

This spring, when Marquise received a message saying that Aquinas needed donations of face masks, she jumped at the opportunity to give back. She hand-crafted a stack of masks and mailed them to campus.

"When I saw the call from the College, I was happy to help, and it was nice to be able to do something from so far away," Marquise said. "It's good to still feel connected to Aquinas."

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**READY TO TAKE ACTION?**

*If you would like to support  
Urgent COVID-19 Aid at Aquinas, please visit  
[aquinas.edu/office-of-advancement](https://aquinas.edu/office-of-advancement).*

## OLLI at AQ

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at Aquinas College is a community of adults age 50 and older joining together to achieve personal transformation of mind, body and spirit through lifelong learning and community service.

Modestly priced tiered memberships are available, providing access to non-credit courses and special lectures taught by professors from area colleges and universities and professionals from diverse disciplines.

All fall 2020 courses are currently being offered in virtual online classrooms with limited in-person classes available for those without internet access. Call OLLI at (616) 632-2430 or visit [aquinas.edu/OLLI](https://aquinas.edu/OLLI) to register for a course. Join us for great educational opportunities and fun!

## Alumni Survey: Your AQ Alumni Association Wants to Hear From You

As we explore the ways we can add value to our alumni, we are asking for your feedback. Please take a moment to complete our Alumni Survey by October 31, 2020. The survey is anonymous and takes about 10 minutes to complete. The results will help plan for improved alumni benefits and services in the future.

**Begin the survey now at  
[aquinas.edu/alumnisurvey](https://aquinas.edu/alumnisurvey).**



AQUINAS COLLEGE

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