



EMBODYING THE MISSION IN A NEW ERA:
INVITING COLLABORATION, SERVING STUDENTS
BETTER & WORKING TOGETHER TO IGNITE
THE POTENTIAL OF OUR GLOBAL SYSTEM

Thomas M. Evans, PhD
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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear colleagues and friends,

When I joined the University of the Incarnate Word in August 2017, I was thrilled to be joining a university unlike any other – one with deep commitment to a living Mission rooted in an ever-present charism gifted to our founders, the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word. UIW was blessed with many strengths that distinguished it from its peers, but principal among them was, and continues to be, unwavering dedication to providing an education and an experience that transforms.

I also knew I was joining a university during a time of great transition, not only due to the natural shifts that occur during a new president's inaugural year, but also because the higher education sector was changing in ways not seen before. Our competitive landscape was growing fiercer with the opening of new institutions and establishment of new programs in our area. Nationwide shifts in perceptions about the value of higher education were alarming universities that were already dreading an anticipated enrollment cliff. At the same time, UIW enrolled its smallest first-time-in-college class in many years following a period of enrollment growth. I quoted Yeats to the faculty and board and ultimately the entire campus by saying that "the centre cannot hold" and followed up with the rallying cry "but the centre must hold." In the same speech, I shared that it was clear to me that we were often operating as disparate parts, disconnected from one another. I called us to acknowledge our systemness, find strength in working together, and unite

as "One Word to be No. 1 in all that we do." I knew we were on the right path when I saw that the message resonated with many and became a part of our vocabulary.

Enter the Strategic Plan of 2018. Through many listening sessions, discussions and strong forecasting work, we designed a Strategic Plan that was driven by our Mission and articulated our distinctiveness, strengthened our institution, and served our students in our trademark style and in ways that our world demanded. Fueled by our champions and committees, tremendous accomplishments have been and are continuing to be made in the areas that would help secure our successful future in changing times.

What we could not have known was of the pandemic to come and the challenges of every kind that would soon surround us. The Strategic Plan set us up to continue operating well, even as we faced urgent and immediate challenges.

Now, some six years after the establishment of the 2018 Strategic Plan and nearly four years after the start of the pandemic, we face the pandemic's ripple effects as well as new challenges and opportunities on the horizon. Among them are post-pandemic budget issues that we continue to work through in our efforts to ensure the health of the UIW system and ensure we have the resources to invest in our future. As



we near the 150th anniversary of our founding, we must now look to the future and consider how best to continue answering the call made at our origin: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, suffering in the persons of a multitude of sick and infirm of every kind seeks relief at your hands."

In the coming pages, you will find my thoughts for leveraging our strengths in furtherance of Mission, which I hope will spark engaging conversations about our future. This is the first of a multi-phase Strategic Planning process that I have asked Chief of Staff John Bury to lead and that will rely on our collaboration and united efforts. Thank you for taking part and for bringing all that you do to UIW.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. Evans, PhD
President

NAVIGATING PANDEMIC RIPPLES & FINDING A LANDSCAPE OF OPPORTUNITIES

As a university community, we are well aware of the changes and challenges that the pandemic presented and those that remain. While many of our university peers have reduced programs, conducted layoffs, or even face the prospect of closure, UIW has withstood the storm and has bucked many of these downward trends. I attribute most of this success to our intentional collaboration and determination to put people, notably our students, first.

The pandemic laid bare student needs and areas of weakness in the higher education community and our response helped us navigate these challenges. Now four years after the height of Covid-19, we face many of the ripple effects left in its wake and, in doing so, find opportunities that we are in a tremendous position to realize:

We can strengthen UIW by better attracting, retaining, and serving students while simultaneously responding to the emerging needs of our student community.

New generations of students who spent their formative years of primary and secondary education during the pandemic demand flexible modalities, customizable pathways and more support from the universities they choose to attend, if they choose to attend at all. Fulfilling needs and opening doors to high-potential students are key to creating positive student experiences that aid retention and graduation. Strong enrollment pipelines and even stronger internal pathways ensure students are ready to continue their education in our system. This also calls us to place a greater value on students' individual experiences, equity and meeting students where they are.

We can enhance our academic experience and our academic standing by elevating research opportunities and emphasizing issues of Catholic Social Teaching.

As an institution founded to help respond to the needs of the world, we were – in many ways – made for times such as these that call for the application of education in service to others. Furthermore, as a minority-serving, Catholic health profession powerhouse with a grounding in the liberal arts, we are uniquely situated for this kind of research and focus. One of the most fundamental and critical ways that we do this is through Mission-driven research. The benefits of a greater emphasis on research are multi-fold: supporting and facilitating the scholarly work of our faculty, offering high-value, practical and hands-on experiences to students, and elevating our institutional status as a center for scholarship and applied research. As our emphasis on research deepens, we also look to broaden efforts to address issues central to Catholic Social Teaching in the academic experience, such as health disparities, economic justice, equality, peace, sustainability, stewardship and more.

We can leverage our strengths and find areas of synchronicity in our system to become bilingual, multi-modal and fully integrated.

UIW is blessed with many campuses, academic programs and a dynamic student body. While we excel in our diversity, the physical distance between campuses often meant that our work occurred in silos. The technological advancements driven by the pandemic and faculty innovation helped draw us closer together and inspired us to consider what is still possible: A UIW system that works seamlessly between campuses, offers degree programs in multiple modalities and is fully bilingual can unite our existing strengths and expand academic opportunities efficiently to better ready our students for a fast-changing world and workforce, and internationally differentiate us as a university of distinction.

UIW: LOOKING FORWARD

Crucibles of change — anticipated and unanticipated — challenged us to assess and better appreciate the potential lying within our people, institution and relationships. We have the elements to continue our evolution into a world-class university system that anticipates and mobilizes to meet future needs, while preserving the connection between faith and learning.

We can distill that potential into three areas of emerging focus that were devised after many discussions with faculty, university leaders, trustees, enrollment experts, higher-education researchers, community partners and civic organizations. I am happy to say that we have a strong foundation on which to build, and, in many areas, already much of what we will need to ensure our success.

PRIORITY #1: FOCUSING ON STUDENT SUCCESS AND ROBUST ENROLLMENT FOR GREATER SOCIAL MOBILITY

UIW as a Home for Growing Populations, Emerging Learners

Our founders ensured that ours would be a culture that values human dignity and sees the presence of God in each person. A strength of our charism is that it allows us to be an institution where students truly feel they belong. The future holds many challenges – but also many opportunities – for our enrollment and retention. We must continue to be a home for students of all backgrounds and a community of faith and education that embraces them.

While universities nationwide brace for ever-shrinking cohorts of matriculating students and a looming drop in college-bound students dubbed the “enrollment cliff” by researchers, Texas is approaching the coming drop from a unique perspective. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, one of every 10 people under the age of 18 in the U.S. lives in Texas. Estimates show that the state’s population could rise to 44 million by 2060 if migration to the state maintains its current pace. That growth scenario would also see an uptick in the age 14 and under population over four decades. The working

age population in Texas is projected to grow by 10 percent over the next 10 years, from 18.3 million in 2020 to 20.9 million in 2030, and growth in this population will come from populations of color.

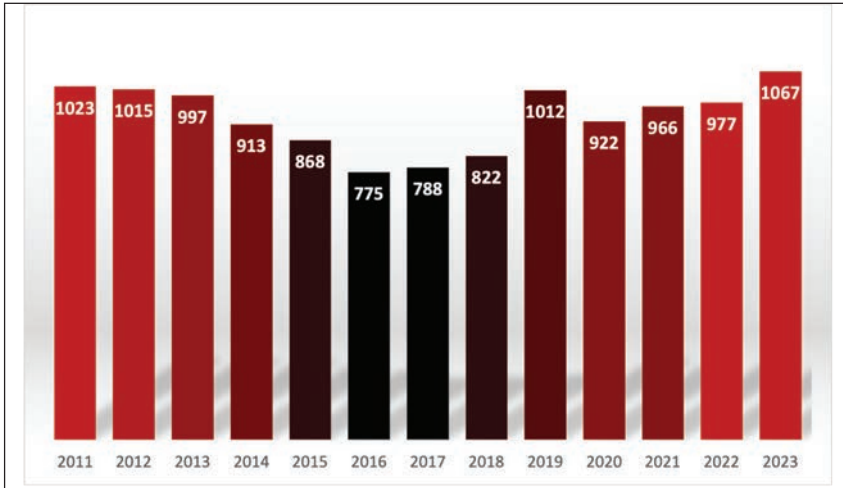
As our state population and labor force changes and grows, data suggests that employers and employees in our state and throughout the U.S. are also facing changing tides. According to higher education research firm EAB, by 2025 about half of all employees will need re-skilling and approximately 40 percent of core skills are expected to change. Employers are seeking talent with updated skills, which often means some post-secondary training, which more than half of all jobs in Texas require, and four-year degrees, required by more than a third of all Texas jobs. Currently, only 8 percent of jobs in Texas do not require any training beyond high school and the further development and utilization of AI could reduce demand for workers in these jobs.

Such forces carry wide-reaching implications for every level of education across Texas. The pool of potential students is growing in our region, but

the challenge remains in ensuring that the doors of higher education remain open to them and that they have the tools, preparation and encouragement to walk through them. Unlike many in higher education, UIW can consider how best to grow future enrollment from a position of relative strength. We are the largest Catholic university in Texas and we can welcome students at nearly every point in their academic journeys through our system of PK-8, secondary and post-secondary campuses and programs. We are also on a growth trajectory among traditionally-aged first-time enrollees in college, with first-time-in-college (FTIC) enrollment rising to an all-time high.

Developing and Strengthening Pipelines Across the System

UIW as a system is fortunate to have a robust portfolio offering a wide array of programs at all levels, including high school diplomas, certifications, and associate’s, bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees. For UIW, they also provide some stability amidst the reversals of fortune taking place in some program offerings. This is evident in our enrollment numbers over the past



UIW FTIC ENROLLMENT: 2011 - 2023

several years. As market and economic forces, the competitive landscape, and student preferences have changed, declines experienced in some programs, such as those in the School of Professional Studies and certain health professions programs, have been counterbalanced with important growth in FTIC student cohorts, Global Online and other academic programs.

However, that only keeps us at a steady state. More critical now with the enrollment cliff upon us is the promise of an ever-shrinking market for what we used to consider “traditional” student enrollment. As a tuition dependent institution facing many headwinds, there are genuine financial constraints that come with being only stable, especially as post-pandemic inflation has increased operating expenses. We must be better than stable. It is apparent that the “centre” that must hold is not solely the traditional undergraduate population, but the entire ministry.

To do this, we must grow pipelines to UIW from outside the university and strengthen those within. Nursing students must be prepared in their undergraduate studies to pursue advanced nursing degrees in their

school. Students hoping to enroll in the School of Osteopathic Medicine must be fostered, prepared and encouraged from their earliest years to do so. Students enrolled in our network of PK-12 affiliated Catholic schools, the Brainpower Connection, should be academically and culturally prepared to continue their educational journeys at UIW. As we do this, we must also continue to build partnerships with government agencies and employers of all sizes, seeking their insights to inform our workforce development efforts and working with them to become the landing places for our graduates.

We know well that enrolling, retaining and graduating larger classes of incoming students across all academic programs will require fresh ideas and renewed commitment. What could those ideas and that commitment look like at UIW? Creating an academic environment where students from diverse backgrounds can thrive and that ultimately supports our promise of providing social mobility compels us to think about all that we do at UIW in a radically student-centered way.

Radically Student-Centered

Our Mission inspires us to see the presence of God in each person. These times call us to do so in ways that centers a student’s humanity, spiritual needs, and comprehensive wellness in their university experience to an even greater degree, understanding that by doing so, we empower them to achieve their dreams of obtaining a degree.

Valuing our students’ humanity is something that UIW is known for and that sets the university apart. As the need for more robust support for all students, but especially among key cohorts, continues to grow, enhancing student services will be an increasingly important strategy supporting retention and graduation. The results of implementing bold, student-first support programming in the past speak for themselves.

1. Serving our Service members

With our location in Military City, USA (as San Antonio has come to be known) and a large population of students being active-duty military, veteran or military affiliated, it is imperative to support their unique journeys and specific needs. In 2017, we identified this as a critical area and formed a strategic priority around improving our operations and student services to become a top educator of service members and their families. The Office of Military and Veteran Affairs (MVA) immediately began work adjusting processes to remove barriers for these students and strengthened services that support their emotional and academic wellness.

As a result, students have reported high rates of satisfaction with our programs. In 2023, we have earned the title of the No. 1 university in the nation for student veterans. Today, more than 20 percent of UIW students

are military-affiliated and they know that UIW is a top destination for high-quality education designed for their success.

The MVA's work also led us to discover what progress is still needed and where new efforts could help us enroll more military-affiliated students and continue to improve our service to them.

2. First-Generation Calling

According to the U.S. Department of Education, one in three undergraduate students identify as first-generation. That is nearly 5 million students. While that number continues to grow and is expected to continue to comprise a large percentage of incoming students, first-generation students statistically have fewer financial resources, and greater instances of food insecurity and economic challenge. Nationally, only 27 percent of first-generation students who matriculate at a four-year college or university go on to get their degrees within four years.

First-generation students comprise 28.9 percent of UIW's undergraduate population. Among Hispanic students, that figure is 36.6 percent. To help support their needs and improve outcomes, UIW's Office of Student Success has launched a new, multi-faceted effort funded by a grant from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The grant supports the Somos Unidos – One Word Project, offering professional development to faculty and staff to develop cultural competency and better serve first-generation, Hispanic and other minority students through evidence-based practices.

After the first year of this project, UIW has a better understanding of what makes first-generation students feel supported, a stronger network of men-

tors and a platform on which to build more services and offerings.

3. Improving Academic Readiness

While many Texas students aspire to a college degree, the latest data from ACT shows that just 21 percent met the college readiness benchmarks across four test areas: English, Mathematics, Reading and Science. Those obstacles are confirmed by data showing that Texas' college-going rates trail national college-going rates by 9 percentage points in the period from fall 2014 to fall 2020. While studies are scarce, the available data shows that delayed college entry immediately following high school graduation decreases the likelihood of attaining a degree.

Enter UIW's grant-funded Title V FLIGHT (Financial Literacy, Integrated Guidance, and Health career Tracts) mentoring program developed to provide targeted mentorship, academic support and financial literacy to Hispanic and health professions students. As part of this sweeping effort, FLIGHT-certified faculty mentors taught a newly-redesigned First-Year Experience class that addressed some of the academic readiness issues mentioned above and prepared incoming first-year students for university-level expectations.

After the first full year of activation, we better understand student responses and can begin to measure how such targeted efforts early in their journeys translates into long-term success.

A Vision of Holistic Human Development and Social Mobility

In building our previous Strategic Plan, we determined that our vision is really one of holistic human development that promotes the enrichment

and wellbeing of each person to be agents of transformation and that the end-goal of our work is "to help every student graduate with the lowest possible debt and secure a career that lifts their lives, their families and their communities." In these past several years, it has been thrilling to see how our emphasis has been manifested through various outcomes.

- UIW ranks No. 1 in the nation among Catholic universities graduating Hispanic students with bachelor's degrees.
- UIW ranks No. 39 among national universities in the 2024 *U.S. News & World Report* ranking of Universities Promoting Social Mobility, and No. 6 among private universities.
- Our School of Osteopathic Medicine matches 99 percent of fourth-year students into top residencies.
- Our Feik School of Pharmacy ranks among the Top 3 schools for graduating Hispanic pharmacists in the continental U.S.

We know that outcomes are driven by our students' experiences on our campuses and in our classrooms. As we think about the next set of strategic priorities for UIW and who we are meant to be, I call on all of us to reflect on our students' experiences at every point in their journeys, from their first point of contact with UIW to their experiences as alumni. *How can we improve, attract, retain, graduate, realize our vision, and foster the Mission so that it flourishes for the next 150 years?*

PRIORITY #2: MISSION-INTEGRATED RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP

I am continually amazed by the way our faculty fulfill the call of our Mission to apply thoughtful innovation and to the collegial process of searching for and communicating truth. One of the ways this is most apparent is through thoughtful faculty-led research and scholarly work. Whether in the sciences, humanities or healthcare — to name just a few fields of study — faculty and students are working to examine some of the most critical issues facing the world today, hoping to create positive change.

Currently, UIW faculty are providing important contributions to the fight against malaria, diabetes-related illnesses, biological regeneration, ecological sustainability, inter-American relations and much more. UIW faculty published 112 scholarly works in 2022. The research and scholarly activity taking place throughout UIW is as innovative as the projects are diverse. Each helps us better understand and respond to the needs of our time.

Promoting social justice is central to our Mission and a guiding value in our scholarly research. UIW believes that we can enhance our academic experience and standing by elevating research opportunities and emphasizing issues of Catholic Social Teaching. As we do, we remain committed to elevating our approach to the humanities, understanding that it is through a well-delivered core curriculum that we fulfill our promise of transformation.

We have made tremendous strides towards our strategic priority of enhancing high-value experiences for our students, in which research plays a key role. While graduate students

play pivotal roles in research activity, undergraduate students are also included, in some cases as early as their first year of study. Work continues toward the establishment of an official undergraduate research program, but faculty have welcomed undergraduate students to contribute to their scholarly research.

Elevating Our Academic Profile

Thanks to those efforts and the continued support and facilitation of the Office of Research and Graduate Studies (ORGS), I feel that a new designation for UIW is well within our grasp. The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education designates doctoral granting institutions based on their level of research activity. We are well on our way to R2 status (“high research activity”) and have the potential to pursue scholarly research at a level similar to such current R2 schools as Texas State University, Texas Christian University and Southern Methodist University.

ORGS can expand and support the pursuit of funding for expanded research and research-related endeavors. Carnegie has announced their plans to expand the elective classification system and are working to acknowledge universities like ours that are minority-serving institutions and that emphasize the public good.

A Focus on Regional Needs

At UIW, there are many research efforts underway that, by virtue of their areas of focus, seek to support the

public good. One clear area for further research focus at UIW lies in the area of health disparities, where innovation can support improved health outcomes for millions of Texans. According to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, health disparities cost America approximately \$93 billion in excess medical care costs and \$42 billion in lost productivity per year.

Our region calls for UIW’s continued workforce and research contribution to the healthcare landscape:

- Texas ranks 47th among 50 states in the ratio of primary-care doctors per person and has “doctor-less” counties across Texas.
- In the Rio Grande Valley (Texas Public Health Region 11) the need is far greater — with a need for an additional 722 primary care doctors by 2030.
- Chronic disease costs Texas more than \$200 billion a year — \$166 billion in direct medical costs and \$66.8 billion in lost productivity.

By 2030, if current disparities in health remain, the growth and changing racial and ethnic composition of the general population will cause an increase in excess medical care spending due to health disparities, sharp upticks in lost productivity costs resulting from these disparities and more than 500,000 years of life lost to mortality rates gaps.

One UIW faculty member working on this front is Yvonne Davila, EdD, MSN, RN, CNE, assistant professor in the Ila Faye Miller School of Nursing

and Health Professions and Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing program director. Davila received a three-year \$1.05 million grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration to improve training for nursing students and acute care nurses working in culturally sensitive care. The desired goal is to improve health outcomes by focusing care on social determinants of health, including health equity and health literacy. As stated in the *National Academies' Future of Nursing 2020-2030* report (2021), to achieve health equity requires strengthening the expertise and capacity of the 4 million nurses in the United States.

Addressing these and related areas of social justice can generate a more resilient and equitable economy for Texas and beyond. As a leading Hispanic-Serving and Minority-Serving Institution, we are primed to address the need for greater equity and representation across the health professions:

- A 2020 National Nursing Workforce Survey reports that 81 percent of all RNs report being White/Caucasian; 7.2 percent report being Asian; 6.7 percent report being Black/African American and 5.6 percent report being Hispanic/Latino.
- Similarly, 74.2 percent of all mental health professionals report being White/Caucasian; 7.9 percent Black or African American and 7.9 percent Hispanic or Latino.
- Studies by the American Hospital Association and the University of Michigan report a lack of diversity among hospital leadership and governing boards; with 87 percent white members, 72 percent male, and just 3 percent Black women.

- A 2021 *Journal of American Medicine* study finds that nearly all the leading diagnosing and treating occupations are below parity in terms of Black, Hispanic and Native American representation.

Artificial Intelligence, Academic Integrity, Catholic Intellectual Tradition & Catholic Social Teaching

At the center of another critical discussion around research and scholarship is the role of artificial intelligence. AI will soon be, if it is not already, an integral part of every facet of modern life, present at every point in the student journey and utilized by every academic discipline. Its spread has taken place at break-neck speed with its mass introduction through sites like Chat GPT and subsequent adoption by nearly a hundred million users over only a few months. This has given institutions little time to fully wrestle with questions about its use and reflect on how to consider AI with discernment. The Catholic Intellectual Tradition empowers us to ask critical questions about how we can utilize AI in keeping with Catholic Social Teaching, which provides us insight about proceeding judiciously and an intellectual framework through which we can examine it.

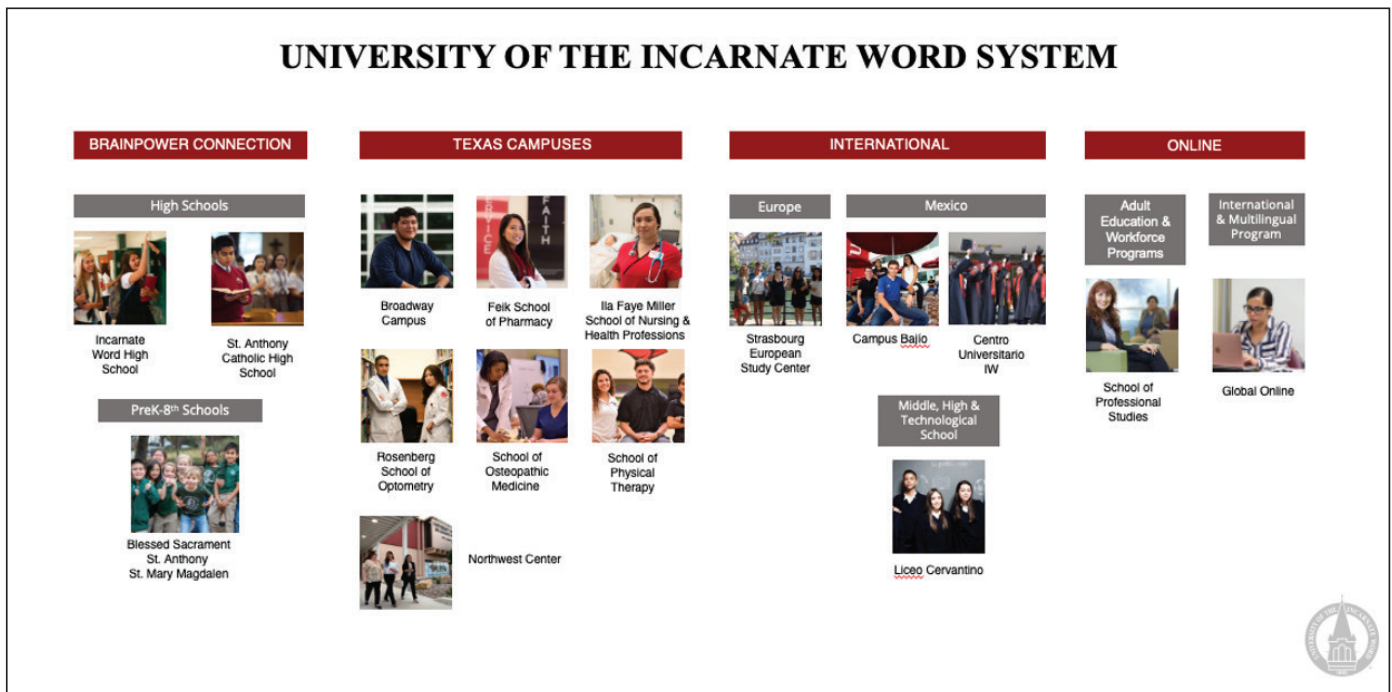
Like our peers, we must consider how to use AI in ways that simultaneously maintain academic integrity and enrich the learning experience while also preparing students for a world that is at least AI-reliant and at most, driven by AI capabilities. Where we diverge is that we at UIW have the added responsibility of contemplating the role of Mission and Catholic Social Teaching in our approach to AI. We must also seek to align our approach to AI with our efforts to cultivate the development of the whole person,

support critical thinking and ensure our students have the information literacy, skills and tools needed to succeed along their chosen paths.

The Teaching and Learning with Artificial Intelligence Fellowship program at UIW will consider all these big questions. This work will play a leading role in supporting our system wide integration at every level of teaching and learning. As we enter this new era of technology and new capabilities arise, we must continue to rely on our core values and guiding principles.

In thinking about our academic vision for the future and our furtherance of Mission, key questions emerge. *How can we develop our scholarly research capabilities to elevate UIW's research standing, improve our communities, and provide practical and hands-on experiences for all of our students? What benefits could AI provide to our faculty, students and staff? How can we utilize it in a way that furthers our Mission and allows us to remain true to our emphasis on Catholic Social Teaching?*

PRIORITY #3: BECOMING A SEAMLESS SYSTEM



* not pictured: TIGMER, UIW clinics, and school in partnership with Centro Fox

We have all the elements to be a truly distinctive university with lifelong and multi-national educational opportunities unlike other institutions. As UIW peers into the future with its changing nature of work, increasingly global connectedness, and greater need for social justice-informed citizens – we see that our superpower is our system.

The Mission of the university is our DNA. As we embrace the concept of One Word, we understand that it is present and active in every component of our system. It is what unites us, shapes who we are and guides what we do. At present, our system incorporates the undergraduate and graduate programs of the historic Broadway campus, four San Antonio health professions campuses, TIGMER (Texas Institute for Graduate Medical Education and Research), 10 student-facing or community health clinics, a center for the School of Professional Students

to take in-person classes in addition to an array of online course and program offerings, and St. Anthony Catholic High School. Internationally, UIW maintains two campuses in Mexico and a middle school, high school and technical school through a partnership with Centro Fox, a European Study Center, and Global Online, a program offering UIW’s U.S. degrees, in Spanish, to Latin America. Add to this our extended family of CCVI ministries in the U.S. and Latin America, academic partnerships, and sister schools on six continents.

Our system is large and complex, but with its complexity comes opportunity. The locations of our physical campuses are in areas deeply important to the hemisphere’s economic growth. Since the 17th century, this region has served as an economic crossroads and broker. San Antonio’s mid-continent location means that 50 percent of the goods flowing between the United

States and Mexico move through this region. Despite the pandemic, trade has seen double-digit growth over the past two years. In Irapuato, home to UIW Campus Bajío, the population has grown 12 percent since 2010 and international sales grew an astonishing 22.8 percent in 2022 over the previous year. Increases in population, economic production, cross-border trade, and associated activity, all place the Incarnate Word system at the center of a changing world.

Our digital infrastructure has brought all our campuses across the globe closer together than ever before and both fueled and facilitated new ways of collaborating. At the height of the pandemic, when international travel was impossible to support, but international learning remained important, technologies allowed for virtual travel through symposia, synchronous and asynchronous seminars, virtual conferences and more. Faculty in the

U.S. and Mexico developed courses that brought together students in both countries to learn collaboratively and simultaneously. In the H-E-B School of Business and Administration (HEBSBA), a global entrepreneurship course pairs U.S. students with their Mexican peers to examine how entrepreneurship can increase local capacity and elevate the lives of the at-risk and underserved.

Binational & Bilingual Offerings

In discussions with the most prominent and emerging employers throughout our regions in Texas and Mexico, I tend to hear the same insights about what qualities they are looking for in new hires. They tell me they are looking for students who are technically fluent, have soft-skills and are fully bilingual in English and Spanish. They are right in line with national trends as nine out of ten employers say they rely on foreign language speaking employees and 56 percent reported that their demand for bi/multilingual speakers will increase in the next five years.

The UIW Mission has always supported access. Across a fast-developing region that spans South Texas, Mexico, Central America and South America, the Incarnate Word system is meeting a need for skilled, bilingual and multi-culturally competent professionals. As industries expand across borders or collaborate internationally, the professionals who are most in demand will speak at least two languages, understand international cultures and markets, and be exceptionally and ethically prepared.

Work in this area is underway, but more can be done. The Office of International Affairs has been working with our campuses in Mexico to

develop programs that prepare Mexican nurses to pass the NCLEX, the U.S.-based nursing exam. They have also developed an English-language program teaching medical terminology to Mexican nursing students.

Concerned, Enlightened & Connected Citizens

The Incarnate Word system also makes it possible for faculty, staff and students to embrace the full possibilities and complexities of globalization through sustained exposure to peers and engagement in a variety of professional service and leadership development experiences.

An interdisciplinary group of 41 faculty, staff and students from UIW's nursing, pharmacy, optometry, physical therapy, community health and nutrition programs and the Ettlign Center for Civic Leadership and Sustainability (ECCLS) embark annually on a mission trip to Oaxaca, Mexico to provide medical services in partnership with Los Quijotes of San Antonio, a non-profit organization focused on healthcare. Pharmacy students and faculty traveled to Las Piedras, Puerto Rico, where they worked with elderly and area residents. This year, ECCLS also hosted another group of UIW students, faculty and administrators to take part in a leadership development conference with our partner Centro Fox in Guanajuato.

In 2019, UIW established The Liza and Jack Lewis Center of the Americas to promote better relations and understanding among the people and nations of the United States, Mexico, Canada, Central and South America through cooperative study, research, service and dialogue. The Lewis Center is designed to serve as a

central resource for information and analysis on critical issues of common concern, bringing people together to exchange views, build expertise, expand business opportunities and develop policy options. As part of this work, the Center brings global thought leaders such as former Mexican President Vicente Fox and Nobel Laureate Rigoberta Menchu Túm to San Antonio and invites students and faculty in the U.S. and Mexico to take part. A fundamental resource for the Lewis Center is the network of faculty members across the entire UIW system whose perspectives have been shaped by cross-border experiences in the Americas and who help create new formative opportunities for our students.

Integrated, Synchronized & Working Together as One Word

Building greater synchronicity between undergraduate, graduate, professional, health professions and global programs to provide a spectrum of offerings will allow us to expand opportunities for our students and support our institution to grow in distinctive ways. Greater synchronicity can:

- **Fuel the development of programs that draw new students eager to study and work internationally.** In the HEBSBA, the Global Bachelor of Business Administration program is designed to prepare students to gain business fluency in the U.S., Mexico, Germany and France through study in each country.
- **Open pathways that support enrollment on every campus.** Students initially studying at Campus Bajío and CIW have taken advantage of programs that allow them

to study at UIW's San Antonio campus and ultimately transfer to the Broadway campus as international students. Many now work as resident assistants in our dormitories.

- **Support more efficient operations.** While fully remote and designed for maximum flexibility, quality remains key in Global Online. As such, all graduate courses for Global Online's master's programs are taught by faculty members from the Mexico campuses, ensuring alignment with UIW's scholarly and formational approach.

If our reach is global, our potential is infinite. We must now make the most of the complexities of our system, looking for further opportunities for collaboration as One Word. *What possibilities exist within our current academic and operational infrastructure to better serve our students, faculty and staff? How can we break down borders between various elements of the Incarnate Word system and eliminate barriers to greater learning for our students?*

CONCLUSION

From the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word's humble beginnings have come countless blessings. Their adobe infirmary and one-room schoolhouse have spawned a sophisticated network of 10 ministries in the U.S. Among them is UIW, with our more than 10,000 students all over the world and our international family of more than 40,000 alumni.

One of the gifts of our Mission is that in its furtherance we discover more of who we are and who we are called to be. This is a tremendous gift, and we are now called to look into the future and ensure that UIW and the Mission exist for another 150 years. Our potential is undeniable; the opportunities that lie before us are ours to discover in dialogue with each other. We must claim what we do better than anyone else and take full advantage of these opportunities. We have a lot of work ahead as we lay the foundations for our new plan. From examining how we can improve our student services, to finding opportunities to strengthen our approach to research, to aligning our system synergistically, our ambitions are bold. We will also continue our work on improving the budget and budget processes so that we have the resources we need to thrive. I will need your help to see it through.

Working together as One Word through respectful engagement we take yet another step forward, together in Mission, helping to ensure that our forthcoming strategic plan is one that encompasses the whole of our ministry, so we can serve our students all the better.

In an address to the International Federation of Catholic Universities in January 2024, Pope Francis shared a thought that so succinctly summarized the importance of our unwavering commitment to Mission in times such as these:

“A greater passion must animate the university, as evidenced in a shared search for truth, a greater horizon of meaning, lived out in a community of knowledge where the liberality of love is palpable. ... It is not enough to award academic degrees: it is necessary to awaken and cherish in each person the desire to ‘be.’ It is not enough to prepare students for competitive careers; it is necessary to help them discover fruitful vocations, to inspire pathways of authentic existence and to integrate the contribution of each individual within the creative dynamics of the larger community. Certainly, we need to reflect on artificial intelligence, but also on spiritual intelligence, without which persons remain strangers to themselves. The university is too important a resource to live only ‘in step with the times,’ setting aside the responsibility called for by the deeper human needs and the dreams and aspirations of the young.”

With the spirit of his words in our hearts and through intentional collaboration in the months and years ahead, we will grow as a spirited community strengthened by a vast network of relationships and define the role of our global university system. In doing so, we advance the Mission inspired by the charism of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word who live by the credo “a life for God and a heart for others.”