

ST. EDWARD'S UNIVERSITY

A Destination University for a More Just World

2024-2025
STRATEGIC PLAN REPORT



Year 3 of our Strategic Plan, during our 140th university anniversary, had incredible milestones

First and foremost, we celebrate the reason we choose to join this institution: to prepare students to think with their hearts and minds and to make a difference in the world.

The greatest milestone was seeing **889 students graduate** during the 2024-25 academic year. These are the students who began with me during my first year as president. When we started on the hilltop, I could see the excitement in their eyes. But I could also see the unknown, the questioning, and the hesitation that comes with embarking on a new journey. As I handed them their diplomas, I saw those same eyes, but wiser and more confident. I have full faith in the difference that our students will make because they are what our society needs today. After all, that is what we're here for.

President Fuentes celebrates with students at the May 2025 Commencement



As our vision states: “(We) honor and respect all members of our community by fostering an **inclusive and welcoming environment**.” During times of uncertainty, we’ve been able to come together and respect all voices by creating safe environments that allow for constructive dialogue and opportunities to engage in civil discourse. Creating a supportive environment also means addressing the pressing needs of our students. Through recognition and support from the City of Austin and H-E-B, we’ve dedicated more resources to fighting food insecurity on campus. On December 4, 2024, as part of the grand reopening of the flagship grocery store on South Congress Avenue, H-E-B donated \$10,000 to the St. Edward’s University Monarchs Food Pantry.

We are rooted in our goal to offer a customized, accessible education to individuals from different factors and stages of their own lives and careers. This March, we announced **ACCompish @ St. Edward’s**, a new scholarship program to help more students transfer from ACC to St. Edward’s which launches in Fall 2025. This program will provide a \$5,000 annual scholarship to students transferring directly from ACC. Students who graduated from a Catholic, KIPP or IDEA high school will also receive an additional \$5,000 annual Affinity Scholarship. This program amplifies our commitment to offering an education that helps students reach financial independence upon graduation. Through our Austin partnerships, 98% of our seniors participated in internships and advanced experiential learning, helping us reach our yearly goal.

This past academic year has been one bestowed with partnerships that will uplift our campus community of students, faculty and staff. As we’re in the early stages of our partnership with YMCA, we advance our vision for a daycare on campus to support our faculty and staff. In November 2024, Bank of America granted \$200,000 to the university to help Central Texas families build generational wealth through higher education, skill development and job training. As we focus on access to **advanced education** through the Strategic Plan, we’re partnering with the City of Austin

to create innovative professional development and training to meet industry needs.

This year, we've inched closer to our goal to create measurable value throughout Austin with our **community partnerships**. Since 2018, the Hispanic Bar Association has been a part of the university's larger strategic efforts to serve our students, many first-generation, by providing funded experiential learning opportunities that will position them for undergraduate and postgraduate success. After a remarkable first-year partnership with Huston-Tillotson University, we're excited to welcome the Rams back to the hilltop next semester. This partnership offers students from both universities the chance to develop unique connections and engage with like-minded peers. Additionally, in our new School of Health Sciences, we're spearheading conversations about healthcare access across Texas through partnerships with Ascension and Lone Star Circle of Care.

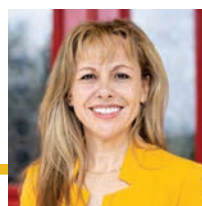
We also extend immense gratitude to the Ladies of Charity Austin who, in their final act of service before sunsetting the Catholic charity, donated \$1 million toward the renovation of the School of Health Sciences. We have proudly named The Ladies of Charity of Austin Women, Children and Family Suite in their honor. As of February 2025, we have received at least four gifts over \$1 million and have reached **more than \$10.3 million** toward advancing health sciences, academic innovation and access.

As we put in the work to elevate the university and support our students, I want to highlight our students' academic excellence and distinction with a **very high**

retention of 80% this year. We've also had 100% persistence for students in our honors program, which is higher than ever. Our dedication to creating a vibrant and inclusive campus was accomplished through the successful launch of three new varsity sports: STUNT, indoor track for women and indoor track for men, bringing us to a total of 16 varsity teams in athletics.

Our campus community has worked diligently to make progress toward our Strategic Plan goal of developing **adequate infrastructure and resources**. Our efforts were acknowledged with the 2024 Tree Campus Recognition from the Arbor Day Foundation for the 10th consecutive year. This spring, the university also received its first-ever Green Grounds Gold Level Certification for Environmental Efforts for its elimination of the use of toxic pesticides on more than 90% of campus. The certification recognizes our increase of organic land care, the replacement of fossil fuel-powered maintenance equipment with electric ones, promoting soil health and fostering biodiversity across the university.

I encourage us to anchor ourselves to the Holy Cross mission that brings us together and helps us lean on one another. Our shared vision for the institution is what helps build this wonderful community that we have the privilege of calling home.

MONTSE FOUNTES, PhD
PRESIDENT,
ST. EDWARD'S UNIVERSITY

OUR VISION

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

OUR GOALS



Academic Excellence and Distinction

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



Living the Holy Cross Mission

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



Vibrant and Inclusive Campus

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



Austin Impact

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



Infrastructure and Resources

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

Celebrating Outstanding Accomplishments

The third year of Strategic Plan 2027 was an exciting set of significant milestones for St. Edward's.

- + 2025 marked our **140th anniversary!**
- + In Fall 2024, St. Edward's hosted the first-ever **White Coat Ceremony**, honoring the inaugural Nursing cohort.
- + In February, we hosted the grand opening of the new **School of Health Sciences**.
- + Mayor Pro Tem, Vanessa Fuentes, issued a **City of Austin proclamation** at the 140th Anniversary celebration and at Austin City Council.
- + The university achieved the **2025 Carnegie Classifications Research Designation** for the first time.
- + **889 students** graduated at the December and May Commencement ceremonies.

#5 Best University in the West*

#4 Best Colleges for Veterans*

#3 Best Value Schools*

#3

Fulbright Student producer among master's institutions

8

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

95%

Fall 2024 Freshman retention rate to Spring 2025

- + Another talented freshman class joined St. Edward's in Fall 2024.

49%

First Generation Students

52%

Pell Eligible

8%

International Enrollment

1 in 5

Students are Athletes



100

Students participated in the new **Undergraduate Research Launchpad** seminar series

A significant milestone was achieved this year with the university's attainment of the Carnegie Research University classification. This achievement was a tangible outcome of the strategic plan enhancing support for faculty research, scholarship and creative work, and providing every student with the opportunity to engage in research with faculty. The Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) continued to develop pre-award, post-award, and compliance services to strengthen the University's research infrastructure. The Office of Sponsored Programs and Corporate and Foundation Relations collaborated in new ways to maintain our commitment to leverage external funding in support of research, scholarship and creative works.



Expanding Academic Opportunities

For the first time at St. Edward's, Nursing students received their white coats and took a Pledge of Dedication to provide compassionate care and address justice and equity in healthcare. Overall, 46 students enrolled in the new Nursing program.

The School of Health Sciences also prepared for **two new graduate programs** (pending approvals) including the Master of Science in Nursing

Advanced Practice with a concentration in Adult Gerontology Primary Care (AGPCNP) and the Doctorate in Occupational Therapy to begin accepting students in 2026.

In the fall of 2025, the School of Natural Sciences welcomes a new undergraduate program, the **Bachelor of Science in Applied Data Science**, addressing a growing industry need for prepared data scientists.

“

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

Jason Callahan, PhD
Professor of Mathematics
President, Faculty Senate



Making an Impact in Austin

We made additional progress toward our **5-year goal that 100% of graduates will participate in Advanced Experiential Learning.**

Our students participated in Career Treks visiting prominent Austin organizations including Google, Circuit of the Americas, SXSW, Whole Foods, Moody Center and Dell Children's Medical Center.



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

Alexis Stokes, JD
Dean
The Bill Munday School of Business



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



of seniors completed internships
5-year goal 85%

680+
active internship sites in the past three years

Delivering a Vibrant Student Experience

187

Student-athletes made the Lone Star Conference Commissioner's Honor Roll by earning a 3.3 GPA or higher in 2024-2025

100%

Fall to Spring retention rate for Honors freshmen experiencing the Honors Living Learning Community and Honors Mentors

4

Productions from our award-winning Mary Moody Northern Theatre

1,279

Students lived on campus, enhancing student engagement and success



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

Mikayla Pastrano '25
President,
Student Government Association





Residence Life significantly enhanced the residential learning experience through several key collaborations and initiatives including a **partnership with Academic Affairs** to launch a new peer mentor program, career development through “Career Treks” and coach drop-in hours, as well as just-in-time transition resources for international students.

Through athletic excellence and expansion, St. Edward's Athletics continues to elevate the university's profile and create a vibrant, inclusive student experience. For the first time ever, field lights were

installed on the Lewis Chen Family Soccer Field.

The university reached its Year 3 Strategic Plan goal of sponsoring 16 varsity teams. This growth, including the launch of Men's and Women's Indoor Track and Field and the STUNT program, added a combined 40 new student-athletes and **recruitment exceeded expectations** across several programs.

We celebrated the second successful year of a three-year external partnership with Huston-Tillotson University with their students living in Teresa Hall.

Living the Holy Cross Mission

Student Achievement

We invested in the success of first-generation and underserved students with very positive results including 94% **student persistence** from Fall 2024 to Spring 2025.

Our First Year Seminars empowered 91 first-gen students to directly connect with faculty in their chosen field. This fosters a stronger sense of belonging and better prepares them for their academic journey.

To inspire and celebrate, we launched “**First to GOat, First to Grad,**” a new and exciting tradition honoring our graduating first-gen seniors. More than 30 graduates were recognized, with 80 students and many proud staff members cheering them on, creating a powerful vision for future success.

We've expanded our **First Gen Internship Program** to a full-year experience with upper-class first-gen students as leaders. These interns actively shape our programs, fostering collaboration and creating welcoming events like “Conchas y Café.” Their creativity shone through “Branches of Support,” a program where students publicly expressed gratitude to their supporters.

Thanks to dedicated efforts and generous grants, student engagement, especially among our upperclassmen, soared by 100%. This year, over 950 students checked in at our events, highlighting the strong desire for connection. Our formal and informal gatherings provide vital spaces for first-gen students to find community and belonging.



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

Abbie O'Neill

*Associate Director of Student Involvement
Past Chair, Staff Council*



Building for the Future

Strategic Enrollment Management

- + With strong campuswide collaboration, we increased our enrollment applications from students with accomplished academic profiles and continued our long track record of students from across the United States and internationally choosing to pursue their education at St. Edward's.
- + 21% of Fall 2024 incoming freshman students graduated in the **top 10%** of their high school class.
- + We launched the **ACComplish @ St. Edward's** collaboration with Austin Community College which ensured a strengthened partnership and streamlined experience for transfer students.
- + We welcomed an increased number of students who qualified for **premier scholarships**, including the Davis New Mexico Scholarship for first-generation students, the Moreau Scholarship providing full tuition to graduates of Holy Cross high schools and the Motta/Panama Scholars for international students attending St. Edward's from Panama.



Environmental Justice

For the 10th year, St. Edward's was honored with the designation of **Tree Campus USA** by the Arbor Day Foundation.

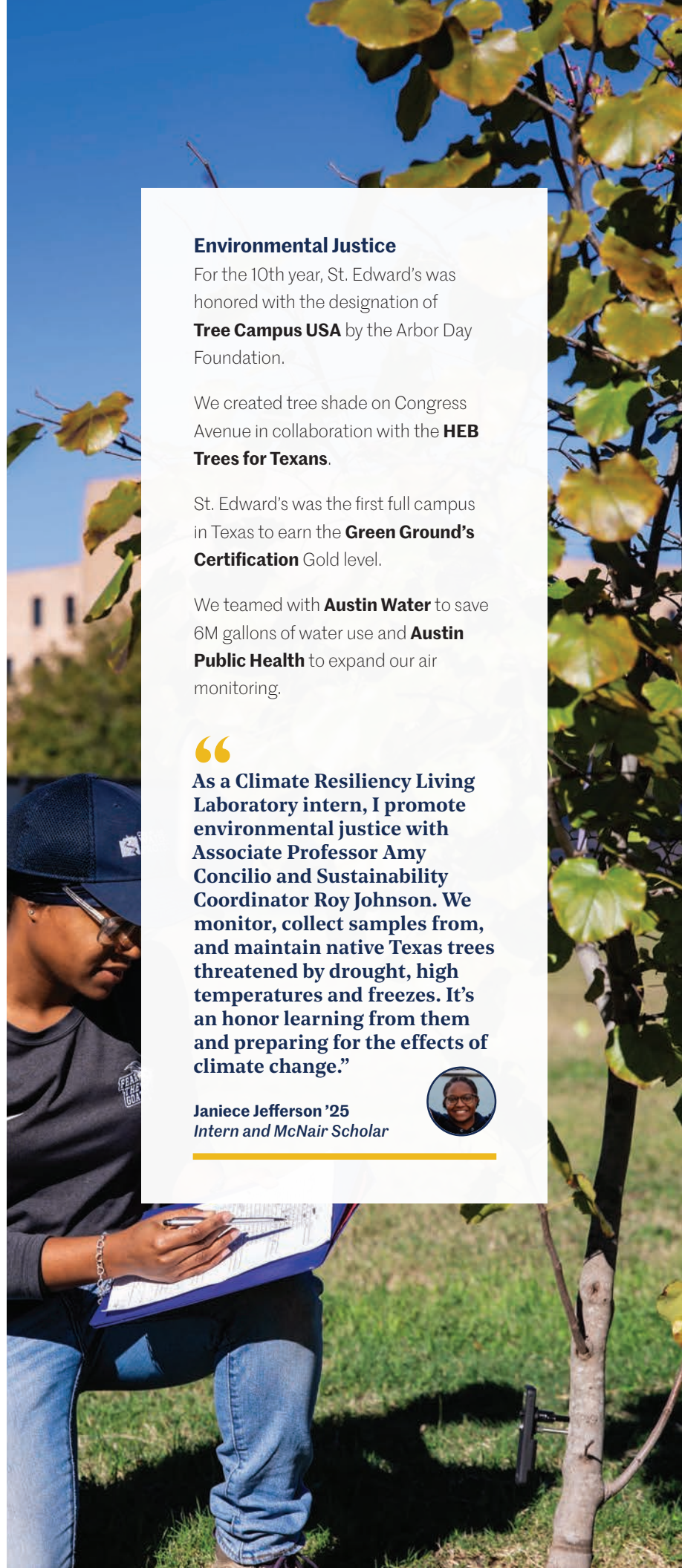
We created tree shade on Congress Avenue in collaboration with the **HEB Trees for Texans**.

St. Edward's was the first full campus in Texas to earn the **Green Ground's Certification** Gold level.

We teamed with **Austin Water** to save 6M gallons of water use and **Austin Public Health** to expand our air monitoring.

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

Janiece Jefferson '25
Intern and McNair Scholar



Historic Investments in Our Students

STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS

\$70.9
MILLION

Scholarships, grants and aid awarded
to students in 2024–2025

\$5.5M

Amount of donor-funded
scholarships and awards
(25% of students)

191 donor-funded scholarships and
awards supported 771 students

PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT

\$10.8+
MILLION

In new giving in fiscal year 2025



100% increase
in unrestricted giving

14% increase in the
number of donors

78% increase in
corporate giving total
from 2024

MAJOR GIFTS



\$2M+

from Pat Munday for
scholarships for talented,
high-need students

\$1M+

from Dr. Kathleen Wilburn for
an endowed professorship and
scholarships in remembrance
of Dr. H. Ralph Wilburn

from Schoen Foundation for
scholarships for promising, first-
generation students within The
Bill Munday School of Business

\$1M

from the Ladies of Charity of
Austin for Fleck Hall and The
School of Health Sciences

\$900K

from the Fondren Foundation for
Fleck Hall and The School
of Health Sciences

43

gifts of \$25K+

2025–2026 PRIORITIES

Launch Graduate Programs in Health Sciences

- ✦ Advance new Health Sciences graduate programs in securing accreditation and enrollment readiness

Further Academic Innovation and Ethical Use of Technology

- ✦ Support faculty development and ethically integrate AI and emerging tech in mission-driven teaching
- ✦ Develop innovative academic pathways – three-year degrees, noncredit options and programs for nontraditional students to serve undergraduate and adult learners

Advance the Research Mission

- ✦ Expand faculty and student research by diversifying funding sources and building partnerships

Bridge Student Learning and Achievement Gaps

- ✦ Close academic gaps, promote equity, and support underserved students' retention and graduation

Foster Community and Academic Freedom

- ✦ Encourage civil discourse, shared mission, academic freedom, and respect across campus

Enhance Residential Learning and Student Belonging

- ✦ Connect academic and residential life, supporting retention and auxiliary revenue

Expand Internship and Career Preparation

- ✦ Forge partnerships to connect students with career-aligned internships and post-grad opportunities

Strengthen Strategic Partnerships in Austin

- ✦ Forge partnerships to connect students with career-aligned internships and post-grad opportunities

Advance the Comprehensive Campaign

- ✦ Define campaign priorities and secure public/private investment for strategic goals

Extend Campus-wide Strategic Enrollment Management

- ✦ Integrate recruitment, retention, and financial strategies to drive enrollment growth through innovative approaches and strategic partnerships



Preparing for the Future

Looking to Year 4 of Strategic Plan 2027,

it's remarkable to see how we've worked as a campus community to accomplish our goals. Our constant dedication to Academic Excellence and Distinction shone this year.

The **School of Health Sciences** has been an exciting initiative. Our programs address justice and equity in healthcare. There are opportunities for us to prepare bilingually-trained health professionals through collaboration across academic schools. Pending approvals, we expect to begin enrolling students in the Master of Science in Nursing Advanced Practice with a concentration in Adult Gerontology Primary Care (AGPCNP) in Summer 2026 and in the Doctorate in Occupational Therapy in Fall 2026.

Our current roadmap also includes a Doctorate in Physical Therapy and a Master of Science in Physician's Assistant Studies. As we raise awareness in the community about these new programs, we're developing relationships with hospitals and health systems.

As **artificial intelligence (AI) evolves**, we're focused on capacity building for how to use this technology. We're engaging faculty and staff with opportunities to understand how AI is impacting the classroom, and our work across campus, while also addressing ethical implications. There are constantly new tools, and we're evaluating many to ensure faculty have the resources needed to support their classroom work with students.

With a focus on student success, our goal is for 85% of our graduating students to participate in at least one internship, and we continue to make good progress. One of the benefits of being in Austin with a robust ecosystem, is the many available opportunities for students. We are **focused on career preparation** and encouraging students to begin thinking about internships as soon as they arrive at St. Edward's. Through our corporate outreach and strategic partnerships, we are developing relationships with organizations and business within the Austin community to help support the expansion of internships.

Another key priority is enhancing support for faculty research and providing every student with the opportunity to engage in research with faculty. This year we reached a key milestone when we achieved the **research university designation** from the American Council on Education and Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. This achievement is a testament to the dedication of our faculty to seeking external funding to support the research, scholarship and creative works that they do themselves, with colleagues, and with our students, and to institutional support for these activities.

We have also made great progress in our internal framework to support undergraduate research on campus. One key initiative, the Research Launchpad, was designed to help interested students learn about the research process, including seminars on ethics in research, on and off campus research, and finding a mentor. This initiative is helping us expand undergrad research, creative works and scholarship opportunities to more students.

This year, we initiated the process for our decennial **reaffirmation of accreditation** by SACSCOC, representing the most important level of accreditation for the university. Next year, we will continue our preparations in order to submit our reaffirmation of accreditation documents.

We will continue to advance our progress in reaching the goals of Strategic Plan 2027. Looking ahead, we will prioritize student success by creating opportunities that will allow them to think critically and engage deeply in their academic experience. I'm excited about our collective work that we will accomplish as we navigate the external landscape and stay the course to becoming a Destination University for a More Just World. Looking ahead, we will prioritize student success by creating opportunities that will allow them to think critically and engage deeply in their academic experience. I'm excited about our collective work that we will accomplish as we navigate the external landscape and stay the course to becoming a Destination University for a More Just World.

Marianne Ward-Peradoza



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