ST. EDWARD'S UNIVERSITY

A Destination University for a More Just World



2025–2026

STRATEGIC PLAN REPORT

As we celebrated the 140th anniversary of St. Edward's University and concluded Year 4 of Strategic Plan 2027, our trajectory remained clear: solidifying our position as a premier destination university, anchored in our Holy Cross mission and deeply integrated into the vibrant ecosystem of Austin.

Academic Excellence and Distinction

National Rankings and Recognition

In the 2026 *U.S. News & World Report* rankings, St. Edward's University set the standard for regional excellence and student-centered education:

#5 Best Regional University in the West
#2 Best Undergraduate Teaching
#3 Best Value
#4 Best Colleges for Veterans

Graduate Program Expansion

The School of Health Sciences expanded the university's graduate portfolio to meet critical regional workforce demands. This year saw the successful launch of the **Master of Science in Nursing (MSN)** and the **Doctorate in Occupational Therapy**. To support these high-demand fields, the university established a **specialized learning lab for Virtual Reality and Telehealth**.

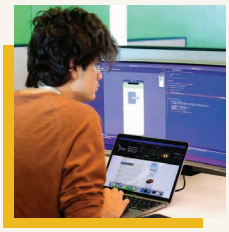
Global Distinction

St. Edward's was named a **Top Producing Institution for the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program**. The **Kozmetsky Center of Excellence secured a $750,000 grant** from the U.S. Department of Education for the **American Civic Explorers (ACE) program**, making St. Ed's the only private Catholic university in Texas to receive this federal funding in 2025.

Research, Scholarship and Creative Works



The **25th anniversary of SOURCE** (Symposium on Undergraduate Research and Creative Expression) reached historic engagement with a **30% increase in student presentations** and the introduction of a rigorous competitive awards structure. To address equity gaps in scholarly participation, the **Student Conference Travel Fund provided upfront funding for 18 students** to present their research globally in venues such as Barcelona, Spain; Washington, DC; and San Antonio, TX.



Academic Innovation and Technology

St. Edward's positioned itself as a leader in the ethical deployment of emerging technologies. We implemented a "scaffolded" integration of Artificial Intelligence across all academic disciplines, supported by intensive faculty development. Our pedagogical philosophy emphasized that AI serves as an "adjunct" to, rather than a replacement for, human judgment and ethical discernment.

Living the Holy Cross Mission

Historic Progress in Student Success

The university reached a definitive milestone in institutional equity: retention parity. We are proud to report an **81.7% first-generation retention rate**, ensuring that our first-gen students are now persisting at nearly the same rate as their non-first-generation peers.

The success of our mission-driven support structures is also evidenced by a **93.8% Fall-to-Spring persistence rate for first-generation students**.

Tangible actions rooted in our Holy Cross values this year included the **"Belonging Blitz,"** a series of six programs to foster consistent campus engagement and the establishment of a dedicated **First-Gen residential community**, providing a tailored living-learning environment on the Hilltop.

93.8%
Persistence Rate for First-Generation Students



Philanthropic Support for Mission

A significant donor gift this year established a permanent endowment for **First-Gen scholarships**, ensuring that the university's commitment to social mobility and educational access remains sustainable for generations to come.

Vibrant and Inclusive Campus

Residential Learning Experience

Strategic investments in residential life yielded record-breaking retention, particularly within our specialized academic cohorts.

82.2%
Retention Rate* for Residential Freshmen

95.2%
Retention Rate* for Residential Honors Freshmen

**Fall 2024 to Fall 2025.*

Athletics Expansion and Achievement

St. Edward's Athletics continued to drive exceptional achievement and performance:

123
Recruited Athletes

3.43
Average GPA of Athletes

21
New Athletic Records



Campus Partnerships

The university concluded a highly successful three-year housing partnership with **Huston-Tillotson University**, which accommodated **130 of their students and staff** in Teresa Hall. This mutually beneficial agreement has been formally extended for an additional two years.



Austin Impact



99%
Participation in high-impact learning opportunities

Advanced Experiential Learning

We achieved our 2026 goal of **99% participation in high-impact learning opportunities** (also reaching the senior internship participation goal of 82%).

Strategic Relationship Development

Career and Professional Development (CAPD) developed **13 new internship relationships** this year, including Frost Bank and TxDOT.

Students were afforded additional career exposure opportunities with **90+ students participating in Career Treks**, visiting organizations such as **City of Austin**, **Dell Seton Medical Center**, **H-E-B**, **Visa** and **Northwestern Mutual**.



Students at the SXSW Career Trek

Strategic Partnerships and Tailored Training

The university launched innovative operating models to serve the Austin economy including:

- **Abilitie and TED**: Launching a **virtual 12-Week MBA**
- A **new master class series** supporting sustainable careers in the arts with **Austin Texas Musicians (ATXM)**
- CAPD **hosted 15+ partners at the Employer Summit**, including **Ascension**, **Breakthrough Central Texas**, **Foundation Communities** and the **Greater Austin YMCA** to focus on internship development and recruitment

Infrastructure and Resources

Philanthropic Momentum

Year 4 was a record-setting year for university philanthropy:

$14.4M
In new gifts and pledges

$675K
Raised for areas with the greatest need

$1M
or more in gifts (six total)

$67.6M
total raised (54% of the overall $125M goal)

Environmental Justice and Sustainability

St. Edward's continues to lead regional conservation and sustainability efforts:

- Recognized as a **"Tree Campus Higher Education"** institution for the past 11 years.
- The **Common Ground Oak** was named **Austin's Tree of the Year** in the Large Tree category.
- Installed a **CapMetro electric bike station** on campus; this station is one of the **largest in the Austin area**.
- Created **Central Texas' first "Tiny Forest,"** a 600-square-foot densely planted space.
- Celebrated the **50th anniversary of Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve**.

Institutional Growth

Strategic enrollment management efforts resulted in a **20+% increase in new undergraduate enrollment**. This growth was accompanied by high academic quality, with an **80% growth among freshmen in the highest merit scholarship rating**.





Strategic Plan 2027 Year 4

The conclusion of Year 4 marks a pivotal moment in our institutional history. By achieving historic retention parity, strong enrollment and expanding our graduate portfolio into high-need healthcare sectors, we successfully positioned the university for the final phase of Strategic Plan 2027. As we transition into the fifth and final year, St. Edward's remains resolute in our commitment to academic excellence, living our Holy Cross Mission, having a vibrant and inclusive campus, innovative partnerships for experiential learning and generating resources to achieve our vision of being **A Destination University for a More Just World**.

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