

Q&A:

OUR Next Step FORWARD *A Campaign for Aquinas Catholic Schools*

Talking Points

HOW WAS THE \$3 MILLION EMPOWERMENT GOAL DETERMINED?

In order to fund perpetual tuition scholarships, \$3 million is needed. Tuition assistance scholarships will be funded from earnings on contributions to the Empowerment Goal and will draw new families to the ACS System.

The earnings on \$3 million will fund 20 to 30 full scholarships, depending on market returns. For example, a modest 4.5 percent return on \$3 million invested would fund approximately 30 \$5,000 full-tuition scholarships.

Since not all families will need a full scholarship, many more families could benefit by receiving half or quarter scholarships. In addition, the principal of the Empowerment Fund will be designed to grow, so that, gradually, more and more families will benefit from larger scholarship awards. This is the best way to grow revenue in a way that will help keep tuition low and the financial health of the ACS System strong in perpetuity.



WHY DO WE NEED TUITION SCHOLARSHIPS FOR FAMILIES WITH LIMITED RESOURCES? CAN'T THEY ENROLL IN THE WISCONSIN PARENTAL CHOICE PROGRAM?

The Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (WPCP) is available to a limited number of families whose income is at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty level in 2017-18. For a family of four new to this program, this would apply to those families making less than \$44,956 in household income. In addition, only 2 percent of students in any school district can enroll in WPCP.

ACS leadership recognizes that many families need tuition assistance that do not meet the minimum threshold for WPCP participation. Since the cost of private tuition is the single most significant factor in the decision of families to enroll in schools outside the ACS System, providing tuition assistance at the elementary level is the best solution to attracting more ACS families.

WASN'T EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION THE BIGGEST PRIORITY IN THE PLANNING STUDY?

Yes. Employee compensation was the top priority identified at this time. The ACS Foundation considered multiple options for improving employee compensation. Capital raised to fund a teacher salary increase or bonus program would provide short-lived relief, requiring annual fundraising to replenish the increased costs each year. Additional revenue from the tuition scholarships will allow for teacher compensation to increase in a measured and sustainable way.

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DIDN'T WE RAISE MONEY FOR TECHNOLOGY DURING THE LEGACY CAMPAIGN?

WHY ARE WE RAISING MONEY FOR TECHNOLOGY AGAIN?

Keeping up with technology costs is an ongoing challenge for all educational institutions. The ACS System is no exception. Funds donated toward our Wisdom Goal will be used to upgrade our technology infrastructure so that it is responsive to the classroom initiatives that each school may adopt. The technology committee has identified and prioritized \$600,000 worth of improvements. These improvements include wiring of the ACS buildings, switch infrastructure and an up-to-date wireless platform with numerous access points. Donations toward the Wisdom Goal will also help in schoolwide monitoring of student activities and establishing an office presence on the first floor of the AHS and AMS building.

Many schools around the country have already made the switch to 1-1 devices for students (such as iPads) to deliver electronic textbooks and other learning solutions. The ACS System needs additional infrastructure and bandwidth before it begins to even entertain these educational opportunities.

MY PARISH IS RAISING MONEY FOR THE BISHOP'S ANNUAL APPEAL, WHICH SEEKS TO IMPROVE EDUCATION. HOW ARE THE EDUCATION FUNDS FROM THE BISHOP'S APPEAL BEING USED?

The bishop's annual appeal helps to fund many important initiatives including sacrament preparation and outreach. Goals from the appeal related to education include continuing education of clergy, the formation of seminarians and deacons, and the funding of in-service workshops for teachers, administrators and parents through the Office of Catholic Schools. A small amount of funds (\$100,000 in 2015-16) from the bishop's appeal goes toward Catholic Schools tuition assistance.

DON'T PARISH ASSESSMENTS COVER THE COST OF PROVIDING AN ACS EDUCATION?

Beginning on July 1, 2000, the primary burden of financing Catholic schools in La Crosse was transferred away from the parishes to an integrated school system. Before this, parishes had to shoulder this burden. Even though parishes are no longer primarily responsible for funding their own schools, the ACS System still relies on parish support to keep tuition costs down. This support is currently needed and greatly appreciated, but, as a whole, Coulee Region parishes have struggled to maintain the same level of support they could once provide. All of the funds raised under the Empowerment Goal will directly support tuition and ease our dependence on parish support.



AQUINAS CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

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