

FALL 2020

FREEING MINDS

Campaign Impact Report

FREEINGMINDS.SJC.EDU

THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES

Uncertain times bring challenges, but they also shine new light on questions as old as humankind. [Learn how your gifts are helping students and tutors to carry the Great Conversation forward.](#)

Dear Alumni & Friends,

When we published our previous campaign impact report, St. John's had just concluded a semester that was unlike anything we had ever experienced.

This fall, we are still finding our way in a very different world, with students learning remotely, separated across many states and continents. Grounded in our shared understanding of who we are and what we do, we are getting pretty good at providing our remarkable, transformative education in such a new format. But we can also attest that all of us yearn for the return of students to campus and to reestablishing our community of learning.

We are getting through this because, whether we are in person or online, our academic Program is at the center, still distinguished by small groups of students

and tutors discussing ideas of enduring significance. This distinctive approach serves to ground us not because it is immovable and unyielding but because it is nimble and responsive, flexible and adaptive. The conversations go where they will, sometimes returning the participants to where they began but more often leading them to new and interesting places.

In the face of so many unknowns, the college itself must also be nimble and responsive, flexible and adaptive. We do not know, for example, when our students will return to campus. But due to innovative admissions initiatives, we can report that inquiries from prospective students are up, withdrawals from current students are down, and enrollment is steady, all at a time when some of our peers are experiencing the opposite trend. Happily, we

are in an excellent position to get through this crisis as strong as we were when we entered it, or even stronger.

We also know that your continued support provides the foundation for our success.

Where this is most evident is in our growing financial strength. For a small college like St. John's to raise \$231 million in only two years is an incredible achievement and a telling indicator of just how much you care about our future. As a result of your gifts to *Freeing Minds* and our work to cut costs, we met our FY20 deficit reduction goal of \$1.9 million—a satisfying figure compared to the FY16 deficit of \$12 million. And, if certain things go our way, we have a reasonable chance of achieving a balanced operating budget in the current fiscal year.

Most importantly, the thrilling, enthralling, enlivening conversations that are so characteristic of the St. John's experience continue even in our virtual classrooms, and they continue because of your willingness to stand at the center of all that we do.

Gratefully,



Mark Roosevelt
President, Santa Fe



Pano Kanelos
President, Annapolis

📍 SANTA FE, NM

“My view has shifted.” With these words, Angela Kimball (SF24) concluded her first seminar as a Johnnie.

Unlike previous generations, she and her classmates did not begin their journey from a seminar table but from their kitchen tables and childhood bedrooms. They had to deal with intruding pets, audio trouble, and strange lighting that left them in shadows. At first glance, it might not appear to be the same experience that so many alumni remember and treasure—until the conversations began.

The barking dogs and background noise gave way to discussions on the nature and role of the gods in the *Iliad*. Who were they to the humans in Homer’s great epic? Who are we to them? Two hours later, many views had been challenged, and some had changed.

“St. John’s College has a double virtue in this respect,” says tutor Christopher Cohoon. “It both attracts and produces people who want and are able to ‘get shifted.’” Even in a virtual world, this virtue remains. ❖



📍 ANNAPOLIS, MD

Supporting students is a priority for St. John’s and one that has taken on heightened significance as students endure hardships brought on by the pandemic.

“I had nowhere else to go,” says Kabita Sen (A23), who was unable to return to her family in Nepal. “St. John’s kept its promise of being my home away from home.”

Nathan Dugan, assistant dean of the Annapolis campus, says donor support for the Student Emergency Relief Fund, which has raised \$75,000 collegewide, has been a lifeline for students like Kabita, who was able to remain on campus. “We thought these gifts would mostly help with technology, but students had much more immediate needs, namely food and housing.”

For Kabita, life on a nearly empty campus was one with “no students, no sounds of chalk on the chalkboard, no dorm room shenanigans.” What remained, however, was the love of a community.

“The care I received from St. John’s helped me to stay calm, to study, to hope,” she says. “And amid the silence, I’ve learned about myself.” ❖



ANNUAL FUND



103%
OF GOAL

Alumni and friends led the Annual Fund to another successful year, raising \$3 million to support the immediate needs of students and tutors.

THE GOAL IS IN SIGHT FOR THE WINIARSKI FAMILY FOUNDATION CHALLENGE.



\$41M
MATCHED

Alumni and friends have now secured more than \$41 million in matching funds to benefit the St. John’s endowment, an important vehicle for safeguarding the future of the college. Donors have a narrow window of opportunity to claim the remainder of the \$50 million match.



THE ST. JOHN'S SCHOLARSHIP SPRINT

A Special Initiative of the Freeing Minds Campaign

Senior year is already a difficult, high-pressure time for high school students who plan to attend college. The global crisis is multiplying those pressures, leaving seniors to make their decisions against a backdrop that is unlike anything in recent memory. In the midst of this fear and financial uncertainty, colleges will be vying for students' attention. St. John's is in a race to reach these students with the promise of a journey to intellectual freedom and an affordable means to pursue it.

The St. John's Scholarship Sprint, a special initiative of the *Freeing Minds* campaign, gives donors an opportunity to help recruit new Johnnies into the Class of 2025 and provide them with scholarship support for all four years of their St. John's experience. The Scholarship Sprint launched in August and is expected to run through at least December. ❖

→ sjc.edu/scholarship-sprint

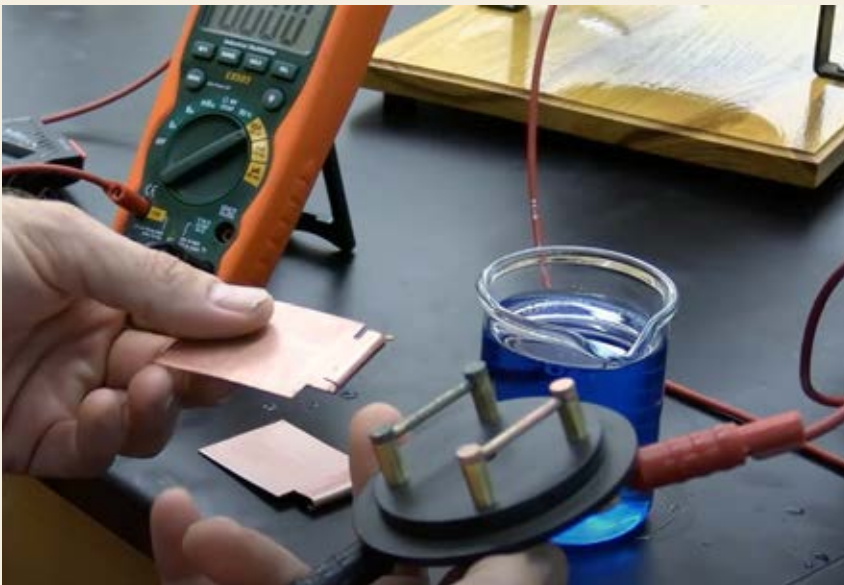
WE NOW HAVE \$231 MILLION IN CAMPAIGN COMMITMENTS TOWARD OUR \$300 MILLION GOAL!

\$231M \$300M



In a year marked by monumental upheaval, those who know and love the college continue to strengthen the ground beneath us.

This outpouring of support played a role in Standard & Poor's decision to affirm St. John's **positive credit rating** in contrast to an outlook for higher education that remains negative for the third straight year.



📍 ANNAPOLIS, MD

Software engineer Kevin Parker (A79) is so confident that St. John's provides the right academic tools for science that he's using his campaign gift to update the material ones.

Kevin and his spouse, Tina, had long desired to augment their 34-year history of support for St. John's with a gift to benefit the Annapolis senior science lab, which had a formative influence on Kevin's life and career. With the Winiarski Challenge still matching gifts, they say the timing seemed right—a decision that now seems especially fitting as the college, like much of society, enters into a new relationship with technology.

Video tutorials produced by lab director Mark Daly will introduce students to the equipment (electromagnetic apparatus, pictured left) and help them to "virtually" recreate classic experiments that have shaped our understanding of reality.

"There are colleges that focus on science ... and they are largely about giving you the answers," says Kevin. "At St. John's, it's as much about asking the questions, and that has served me in good stead." ❖

📍 SANTA FE, NM

When Sunny Hills (SF78) graduated from St. John's, he could not have predicted the world of 2020, with smart phones, smart homes, and near-instantaneous communication.

Although he could not have predicted it, St. John's prepared him for it.

"St. John's taught me how to be an original thinker, capable of learning anything in any field," he says. "I retired early, only to resurface as a leader in an industry that didn't even exist until 24 years after I graduated."

By naming St. John's as the beneficiary of his retirement plan, Sunny has taken steps to ensure that St. John's will continue to prepare students for a future they will help create. His gift is intended to provide lasting support for Summer Academy.

"St. John's Summer Academy exposes young people in an experiential way to their own superpowers," Sunny says. Unleashing that potential is part of his gift to tomorrow. ❖

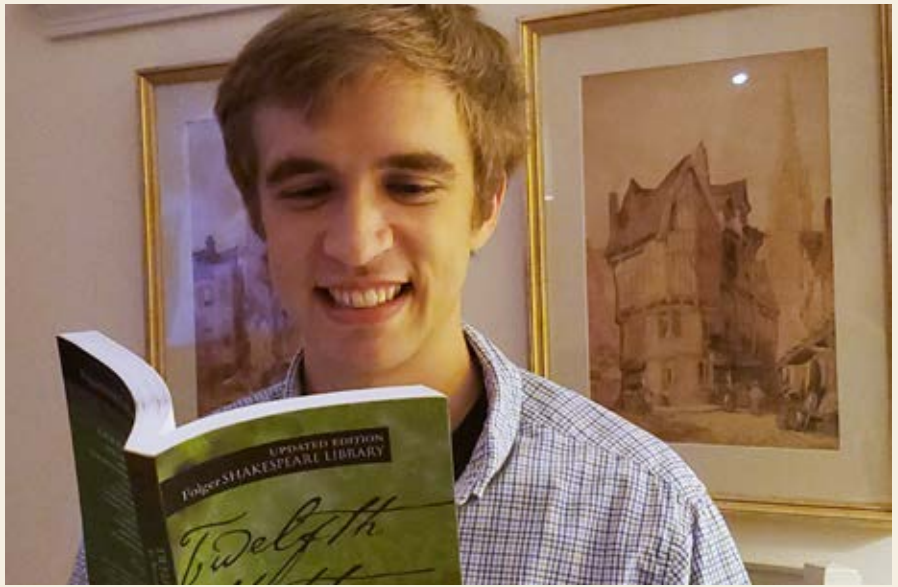
→ sjc.edu/plannedgiving



📍 ANNAPOLIS, MD

In a world turned upside down, what could possibly go wrong—or right? The website of the American Shakespeare Center poses this question to audiences of *Twelfth Night*; but the question could just as easily be asked of anyone.

Caleb Dutton (A21) spent his summer exploring some answers during an internship with the Staunton, Virginia-based theater company, which had to halt production for several months. Economic disruption, Caleb found, has been a devastating feature of our changed world. His behind-the-scenes efforts helped the company to resume live performances, and Caleb capped off his internship by enjoying “thrilling productions of *Othello* and *Twelfth Night*.” Between the tragedy and the comedy, he discovered what can go right, even in—or especially in—times of struggle. “Shakespeare has endured for four centuries and multiple pandemics. It’s fulfilling to know that I helped to preserve an art form that still has the power to change how we see things.” ❖



📍 SANTA FE, NM

Vernal Pope is new to the St. John’s experience, and her Summer Classics encounter with Toni Morrison had something to teach her about living, about reading, and about teaching. “The seminar experience helped me to better appreciate what it means to listen to others from a place of honor,” says Vernal, who spent the summer immersed in Morrison’s *Song of Solomon*.

A teacher for Cherry Creek schools in Colorado, Vernal received a scholarship to attend Summer Classics through Southwest Scholars, a donor-funded initiative aimed at promoting St. John’s to students and educators in the southwestern states. Partner schools enjoy a variety of benefits, including scholarships that allow school personnel to attend the Graduate Institute and Summer Classics, both in Santa Fe.

Vernal says the experience helped her to better understand what it means to “invite students into the text,” a lesson that will in turn help her to be an ambassador for St. John’s within her school.

We currently have agreements with 21 partner schools, due in large part to gifts received through the *Freeing Minds* campaign. ❖

📍 COLLEGEWIDE

For John Edwards, assistant director of admissions operations, the most “profoundly Johnnie” moment of the St. John’s Summer Book Club came when students used videoconferencing to peer into one another’s bookshelves. It was a fitting close to two weeks of stirring conversations about how we see ourselves and others.

Like any St. John’s seminar, it all began with a text. “This deceptively simple little book hid profound explorations,” says John, who led a discussion of Martha Wells’ *All Systems Red*. “A self-aware cyborg’s desire to avoid the humans around him was fascinating to read in a time of quarantine.”

The Summer Book Club, which gave participants a chance to explore up to eight non-Program books, is part of an effort to engage admitted students at a time when they might still be weighing their options.

“I am reminded of how uniquely this community excels at cultivating conversations,” says John. “Although we are physically apart, we don’t have to be isolated in our curiosity. This might just be the perfect time to be a Johnnie.” ❖





ST JOHN'S College

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