

THIEL 2026:

Launching the Leaders the World Needs Now

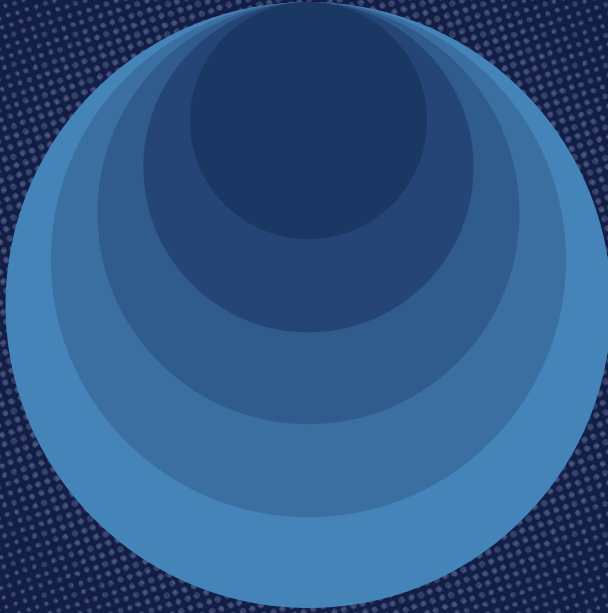


The strategic plan for Thiel College 2021-2026

Approved by the Thiel College Board of Trustees November 23, 2021

Thiel College:

combining tradition with
innovation *for more than 155 years!*



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Foreword

Dear Board of Trustees, Alumni, Friends and Colleagues,



The College's new strategic plan, *Thiel 2026: Launching the Leaders the World Needs Now*, will guide our work over the next five years (2021-2026). Projecting a spirit of confidence and innovation, the *Thiel 2026* plan envisions a bold and dynamic Thiel, engaging undergraduate and graduate students in distinctive educational experiences in a diverse, equitable and inclusive learning environment. Increased partnerships and community outreach will expand opportunities for students, deepening Thiel's commitment to service as an asset for Greenville and our region. Developing creative leaders with influence on their careers, lives and the larger world, Thiel will gain recognition as an institution of distinctive strength.

The *Thiel 2026* plan originated in envisioning sessions spearheaded by Board of Trustees leadership. These conversations engaged Trustees, faculty, staff, students, alumni and community partners. Comprising more than 80 college stakeholders, these groups considered social and economic trends affecting higher education and their impact on Thiel. Appreciating the larger context in which Thiel operates, the envisioning process looked ahead, imagining how the institution would be transformed as it navigates both challenges and opportunities.

In May of 2021, the College appointed a Strategic Planning Committee (SPC), who, together with the Board of Trustees, considered the outcomes of the envisioning process and proposed objectives for enrollment, program mix, and revenue sources. During the summer months, the SPC developed goals and strategies to advance Thiel's vision and mission.

In August, the campus community reviewed the draft strategic plan, providing feedback and recommendations, and over the fall semester, the Cabinet refined the plan, testing assumptions and gauging capacities. The Board of Trustees considered the plan at their fall meetings and, after the faculty's endorsement in November, voted to adopt it.

The *Thiel 2026* strategic plan will prioritize campus investments, including an estimated \$25 million in capital improvements. A comprehensive fundraising campaign will fuel these investments while also enlarging support for scholarships, programs, and the

Thiel Fund. Strategic leadership guided by the *Thiel 2026* plan will strengthen the College's appeal to philanthropic individuals, foundations, and supporting organizations, reflecting an institution that is innovative, vibrant and singular.

The strategic plan is a living document. It will guide the College over the next five years, evolving as new opportunities and challenges arise. The annual planning process will identify priority actions, and the College's financial investments, budgets and fundraising efforts will reflect those priorities and the broader goals of the strategic plan. The unfolding of the plan and the monitoring of its objectives will be accomplished within the College's shared governance framework, with the Board, faculty and staff actively engaged in the oversight and advancement of the College.

The College must also continue to evolve and diversify our student, faculty and employee

profile. A diverse Thiel is a stronger and better Thiel. This means a commitment to recruitment practices that provide access and a campus environment that is welcoming and inclusive. Our curriculum must also expand in its diversity and inclusion, as we reach out to collaborate with our surrounding communities.

The success of the *Thiel 2026* strategic plan will depend on the shared commitment and collaboration of the College's stakeholders. Symbolized in a fully overlapping Venn diagram, each of the plan's goals are distinct but together advance the goals as a whole. In the same way, Thiel stakeholders—Board, administration, faculty, staff, students and alumni—have individual roles and relationships with the College and yet share a commitment to Thiel's success. We embrace the College's mission and values, advancing educational excellence in the endeavor to “launch the leaders the world needs now.”



Our Identity



THIEL 2026: *Launching the Leaders the World Needs Now*



Identity Statement

Founded in 1866, Thiel College is an independent liberal arts college in western Pennsylvania, offering innovative undergraduate and graduate programs. Shaped by its Lutheran heritage, Thiel provides an accessible and inclusive learning environment and serves a diverse population of students. Thiel offers robust co-curricular and athletic experiences and fosters lifelong growth, learning, and relationships.

Our Mission



THIEL 2026: *Launching the Leaders the World Needs Now*

Our Values

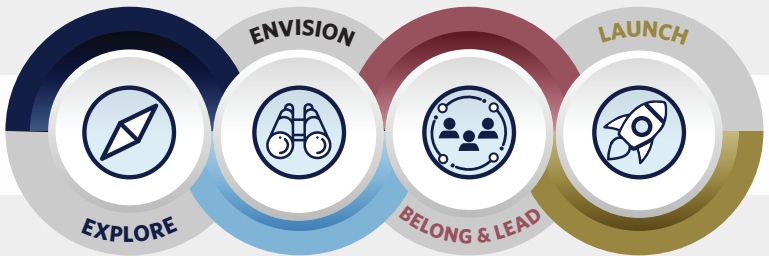
Thiel College prepares students for careers and lives of meaning and purpose and empowers individuals to reach their full potential in a diverse, equitable, and inclusive learning environment. Promoting educational excellence, innovation, and ethical leadership, the College provides distinctive learning opportunities for students and serves as an asset for the region's social, economic, and educational development.



Our Vision

Innovation

Over the next five years, Thiel College will embrace and project a bold and dynamic culture of innovation and creative leadership. The campus community will collaborate to advance a compelling mission, adopting innovative approaches to student learning, curriculum development, community partnerships, and campus activities. The College will create new opportunities for students, faculty and staff to advance innovation and develop as creative leaders. New business, community and educational partnerships will extend the College's reach and provide experiential learning, internships and networking opportunities for students. While continuing to foreground its core value of providing highly personalized learning experiences in a caring and supportive campus environment, the College will expand its use of technology to enhance student learning, increase collaboration and modernize all aspects of campus programs and services.



Signature Programs of Distinction

The College will foreground signature programs, such as the Dietrich Honors Institute, the Health Professions Institute, and the Haller Enterprise Institute, to engage motivated students eager to pursue exceptional learning opportunities. Experiential learning, such as internships, undergraduate research and problem-based learning will be integral to every field of study at Thiel. These experiences will build the student's career readiness and potential engagement with Greenville, Mercer County and the larger region. Partnerships with other colleges and universities and study abroad offerings will also enlarge educational opportunities at Thiel.

The College will design multiple ways for students to develop their leadership potential and engage across differences – beliefs and values, political perspectives, lived experiences and identity. Thiel's "The Tomcat Way" program will create a distinctive educational experience for undergraduates, through which they will gain a sense of themselves and a sense of purpose in service to others and the world, while Thiel's graduate programs will emphasize the development of students as leaders in their fields.

The College's performing arts programs will be important features of Thiel's liberal arts mission. Theatre, choir, and band programs, together with the Con Spirito concert series, will bring distinction to the College, giving all students opportunities to participate and enjoy music, theatre, and the arts. The College will strive to build strong connections with high school and community performing arts programs, host performing artists and concerts, and serve as a center for the arts in this region.

Academic Programs & Priorities

At both the undergraduate and graduate levels, Thiel will provide a rich liberal arts education coupled with innovative and technologically-enhanced learning opportunities. Creative and ethical leadership, career readiness, and an aptitude for lifelong learning will be hallmarks of the College's graduates. Rewarding opportunities, immediately after graduation and across a lifetime, will engender a sense of meaning and purpose in the careers and lives of Thiel graduates.

The College will continue to hone its undergraduate offerings while developing 2-3 additional graduate programs. Building on its academic strengths and meeting market demands, the College will emphasize science and allied health, business and accounting, and media and communication. While prioritizing high-demand academic programs, Thiel will continue to offer a rich array of programs in the arts and humanities, social sciences, sciences and professional fields.

Diversified Enrollment

The College will continue to attract a rich diversity of motivated students, including students from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, a substantial percentage of students of color, international students, and first-generation students. Diversity, equity and inclusion will remain central to the College's mission, with enhanced opportunities to realize these values in College programs and campus life.

By 2026, Thiel will enroll (850-1,000) undergraduate and (160-200) graduate students. Recruitment of undergraduate and graduate students from outside of the College's current admissions target area will grow even as Thiel continues to draw enrollment primarily from within a 300-mile radius. The College will continue to attract talented student-athletes while strengthening recruitment to Thiel's outstanding academic programs and emphasizing the full range of co-curricular opportunities at Thiel, including student leadership and performing arts.

While maintaining and strengthening the experience of traditional-aged undergraduate students in its residential program, Thiel will also support older students and working professionals eager to earn a Thiel degree or certificate from an approved program. The College's graduate programs will enroll recent college graduates, students returning to full-time study after workforce experience, and working professionals striving to complete their graduate degrees. Reflecting Thiel's commitment to both access and student success, the College's recruitment efforts will identify and support academically motivated students, eager to be active members of the Thiel College community.

Expanded Educational Offerings

The College will distinguish itself as a hub for lifelong learning. Using a mix of in-person and remote delivery platforms, the College will broaden its educational reach, offering non-degree and workforce development programs, including certificate courses, training programs, and skills development opportunities. Serving working professionals and residents from Mercer County eager to enhance their knowledge and skills, the College will serve the wider educational needs of the region, maximizing the use of campus classroom facilities, especially during the weekends, evenings and summers.

Athletics, Recreation & Wellness

Athletics, recreation and wellness programs will promote healthy and active lifestyles for students, faculty and staff. Intercollegiate athletics programs will support students to excel in competitive sports and enhance the College's brand. The varsity programs will demonstrate competitive strength and develop student-athletes as leaders, learners and engaged community members. Enlarged varsity, intramural and recreational opportunities will foster a positive school spirit and attract and retain academic and athletic talent to Thiel.

Group and individual wellness programs will establish health and wellness as essential aspects of campus life, and the Campus Health Center will offer robust medical and mental health services. Students will enjoy extensive recreational opportunities, including intramural and club sports, outdoor recreation options, and health and wellness programming.

Campus Appearance & Facilities

Thiel's campus will be enhanced to project natural beauty and designed to foster environmental stewardship. Academic facilities will support educational innovation and collaborative learning, and residential halls will support student development, leadership and campus engagement. The Academic Center will be extensively renovated to include technology-enhanced classrooms and innovative spaces for student collaboration. Thiel's indoor athletic facilities will be redesigned and enlarged to support Thiel's varsity, intramural and club programs, and the College's renovated and modernized residential facilities will attract and support students. Together, the campus facilities will project Thiel's spirit of innovation while, at the same time, fostering an intimate atmosphere of connection and interaction.

PENN Northwest
Development Co.

Sharon REGIONAL
Medical Center

St. Paul's
SENIOR LIVING Community

Community Partnerships & Outreach

The College will establish innovative partnerships with regional businesses and organizations and make strategic investments to enhance the socio-economic well-being of Greenville and the larger region. College leadership, along with faculty and staff, will pursue collaborative outreach efforts to enhance regional economic and social development. Students will be extensively engaged in internships and community service to enhance their professional development and benefit the region. Thiel's performing arts programs will provide cultural enrichment, and a robust program of outreach programs, including camps and conferences, will enhance community resources while maximizing the use of campus facilities and generating auxiliary income for the College. Serving as a model for other colleges in rural locations, Thiel will demonstrate the vitality gained through community outreach and collaboration.

Strengthening the College's Value Proposition & Institutional Confidence

The College's value proposition of providing accessible degree programs and lifelong learning opportunities will be evident in the College's brand and reflected in the outcomes and life stories of Thiel alumni. The College's value to Greenville, Mercer County and the region will be recognized as the College becomes a center for innovative educational programs and an engine for regional social and economic development. Thiel's appeal to philanthropic individuals, foundations and supporting organizations will increase along with the College's impact on students and the region, enlarging its endowment and securing its future. Transformed into a highly innovative and multifaceted organization, Thiel will look to the future with confidence, proud of its historic strength as a liberal arts college while embracing the potential to become a more complex institution. Financially sound and thriving, Thiel will serve as a beacon of educational excellence and lifelong learning for students and the region.



Our Values



The strategic goals are derived from the College's mission and vision and serve the specific purpose of developing creative leaders who can innovate in a diverse world. These interdependent goals will foster collaborative endeavors by College stakeholders.

Strategies



Goal 1: Innovation & Leadership

Drive innovation, creativity and leadership development to gain a competitive edge.

- S1:** Expand opportunities for students, faculty and staff to initiate innovation and develop as creative leaders on campus and in their lives.
- S2:** Strengthen the College's student and career development programs, launching graduates ready to innovate and lead in a competitive and changing world.
- S3:** Implement The Tomcat Way for student success, and develop students as reflective, innovative leaders.
- S4:** Expand the adoption and use of technology to enhance learning, administrative and operational innovation, and market competitiveness.
- S5:** Enhance Thiel's market competitiveness by foregrounding innovation, creativity, and leadership development in the College's brand messaging.



Goal 2: Dynamic & Bold

Establish a dynamic and bold Thiel, fostering leadership in a richly diverse, inclusive and equitable environment.

- S1:** Attract and retain motivated undergraduate and graduate students from diverse backgrounds who are enthusiastically engaged in curricular and co-curricular learning opportunities.
- S2:** Create a campus community that is rich in diversity, equitable, inclusive, respectful and intentional in bridging differences.
- S3:** Offer innovative undergraduate and graduate programs that advance the College's mission, meet current market demand and prepare students for careers of the future.
- S4:** Create a vibrant campus environment that increases the engagement of all students and provides opportunities for leadership development.
- S5:** Develop robust athletic, co-curricular, and wellness programs that enhance the student experience, strengthen community relations and school pride, and attract talented students to Thiel.



Goal 3: Reach & Impact

Expand Thiel's reach and impact, contributing to Greenville's and the broader region's social, economic and educational development.

- S1:** Strengthen and develop new partnerships and collaborations with businesses, governmental and community organizations, and increase shared programming, internships, service-learning, and community-based research.
- S2:** Offer new programs to meet regional needs for continuing education, career development, and lifelong learning.
- S3:** Become a dynamic venue for campus and community events, competitions and the performing arts, hosting a rich array of programs to attract people to campus.
- S4:** Develop Thiel's alumni network to extend the College's reach, promote alumni successes and increase alumni engagement.
- S5:** Foreground Thiel's commitment to outreach and regional development as a distinctive feature of the College's brand.



Goal 4: Resources & Investment

Strengthen the College's resources, making investments to secure the future.

- S1:** Attract, develop, and retain innovative and diverse faculty and staff committed to being active participants engaged in the broader campus community.
- S2:** Make strategic and sustainable investments in academic, athletic/wellness, and residential facilities to support the College's programs, beautify the campus, enhance the student experience and attract new students in a competitive market.
- S3:** Manage the College's resources, programs, and operations to produce a positive annual change in net assets.
- S4:** Make investments in programs and facilities to increase auxiliary income.
- S5:** Launch a successful comprehensive campaign to inspire philanthropic investments in the College.

Alignment & Implementation

The *Thiel 2026* strategic plan will strengthen the College's Mission and advance a vision of innovation, outreach and leadership development. The plan establishes four Goals and identifies 20 Strategies aligned with the goals. The development of Priority Actions will guide the implementation of the plan. Assembled annually, the Priority Actions will be developed through collaborative engagement with campus stakeholders, guided by the ongoing assessment of the outcomes of the plan as it unfolds over five years.

The Action Plans will identify Responsible Parties to lead the implementation of the plan. They will craft detailed Work Plans, including timelines, budgets, staff plans, projections and research. Review and approval by the appropriate faculty governance and management bodies will guide implementation. Faculty and staff will layer Priority Actions and related items from Work Plans into annual Program & Personnel Performance Goals to ensure the full alignment of the plan and its implementation.

The College will align budget, staffing and fundraising priorities with the *Thiel 2026* strategic plan. The development of the annual Action Plan will include projected budget and staffing requirements. These budget projections as well as resources identified in related Work Plans will be reviewed within the College's budget process to ensure appropriate alignment of resources with the *Thiel 2026* strategic plan.

An ongoing implementation of the strategic plan through annual planning will tap the creativity of campus stakeholders, foster active governance oversight and provide opportunities for new initiatives to advance *Thiel 2026* and the College's mission.



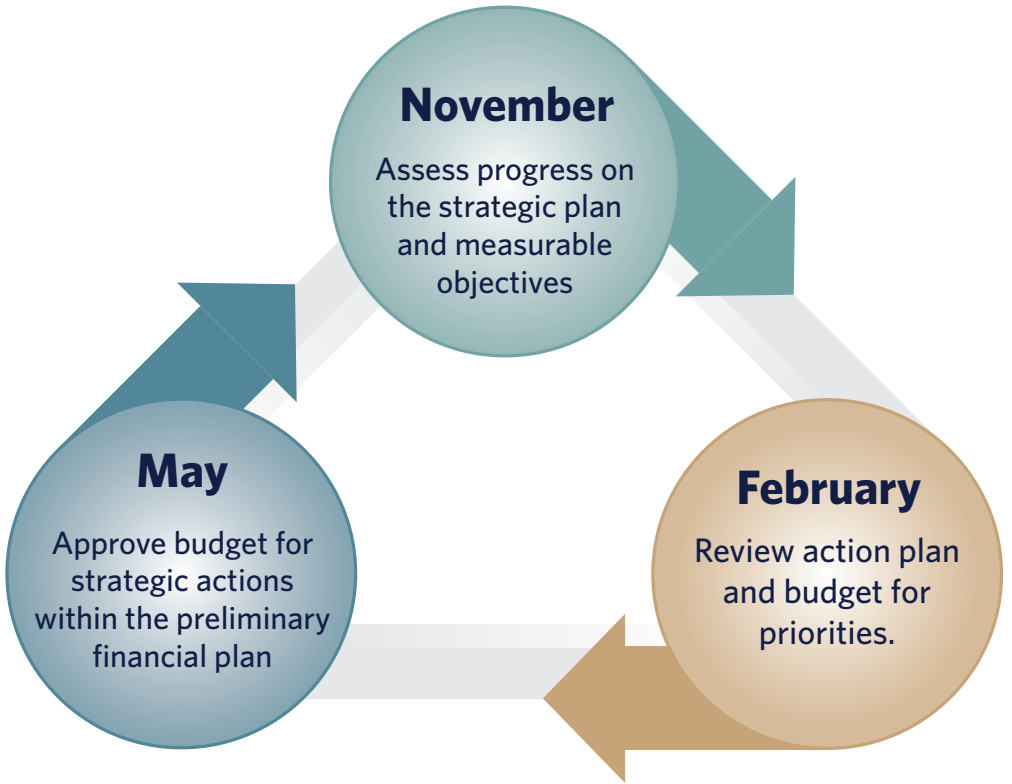
Assessment

Active and ongoing assessment will be integral to the implementation of *Thiel 2026: Launching the Leaders the World Needs Now*. The **Goals** of the plan will be monitored using sets of **Objectives**, measuring progress from 2021 baselines to 2026 benchmarks. The **Strategies** will be assessed against expected **Outcomes** for implementation and impact, and the **Priority Actions** will be measured in **Progress Reports** outlining their completion and impact on the forward momentum of the strategies. The assessment process will measure the effectiveness of the strategic plan to strengthen and advance the College.



Board Oversight

The Board of Trustees will actively oversee progress on the *Thiel 2026* strategic plan and allocate resources to advance strategic initiatives within the annual budget-approval process.



2026 Objectives

Progress on the Strategic Goals will be measured against sets of objectives for each goal. A detailed set of measures, identifying 2026 baseline and annual benchmarks will be monitored internally. What follows are a selection of 2026 objectives.

Goal I: Innovation & Leadership

ESTABLISH INNOVATION COMMITTEE

support **2 NEW**
STRATEGIC INITIATIVES
annually

Operationalize



throughout
CAMPUS

GROW REPUTATION
as the **CAMPUS**
that develops **STUDENTS**
as **LEADERS**

Foster
A culture of

TECHNOLOGY

Goal 2: Dynamic & Bold

55% GRADUATION RATE

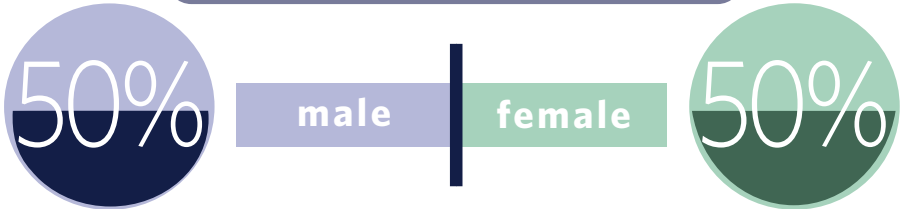
Cohort Retention	
First-year	75%
Sophomore	85%
Junior	90%
Senior	95%

2-3 New Grad Programs

2026 Total Enrollment:
850 - 1,000 undergraduate students
160 - 200 graduate students

2027 New-Student
Enrollment: **315** Students

Diversity of entering class:



First-year retention rate:

75%

25%

racial/ethnic diversity

96%

of graduates in the Class of 2026 **employed or in graduate school** within 6 months of commencement.

Goal 3: Reach & Impact

5 NEW Partnership Agreements
with **INFLUENTIAL ORGANIZATIONS**
regional

75% UNDERGRADUATES
engaged in **OFF-CAMPUS**
internship or field placement
experience prior to **GRADUATION**

10% increase in **ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT**

2 UNDERGRADUATE
degree completion **PROGRAMS**

4 NON-DEGREE
certificate **PROGRAMS**

100% undergraduates
PARTICIPATE
IN ONE OR MORE **community service projects**

Goal 4: Resources & Investment

\$30
MILLION

on-campus capital improvements including

**Rhodehouse Science Building
Spence Academic Center
Rissell-Beeghly Athletic Center
Campus & Residential Enhancements**

Successful
Comprehensive Campaign
to raise at least

\$60
MILLION

between
2022-26

30%
INCREASE *in*

Auxiliary Income
(excluding room and board)

Annual
positive change

in net assets of

\$500,000

by **2026**

\$220
MILLION *in*

Endowment Funds

Attract, develop and retain a
diverse **faculty, coaches and staff**

TALENT POOL

that instills a culture of

creativity, innovation and growth.

Envisioning Participants - 2020-2021

Trustees

Mark Benninghoff '82
Bev Cigler '68
Ricardo Daley '96
G. Leah Dever '74
John Frangakis H '19
Cara Hoehn-Lapic '92, Co-Chair
John Hudson
Rick Huether '74
Catherine Mott, Co-Chair
Brian Nowak '89
Antonio Quarterman '08
Mike Walton
Rod E. Wilt '86
Cathryn E. Zawacki '71

Faculty

Sarahbeth Abalos
Kristin Carlson
Mary Theresa Hall
Jared Hanneman
Tony Kos
Sean McConnor
Sheila Nowinski
Ross Nugent
Laura Pickens '06, Chair
Anna Reinsel '06
Russ Richins
Cindy Sutton
Kara Zuschlag



Staff

Melanie Broadwater '98
Greg Butcher
Jennifer Clark, Chair
Dominick DiRienzo G '22
Carissa Eichmeyer
Justin Gregorich
David Hummel '83
Anthony Jones
Sonya Lapikas
Mike McElroy
Will Mills '08
Robin Sakonyi

Alumni

Isabella Bungo '19
Joe Dunn '01
Jake Hayden '15
Marvin Hill '88
Firdaus Kharas '78
Donna (Sopher) Kline '79, Chair
Cary Lambert '70
John Marrs '83
Emilie Theobald-Rowlands '04

Students

Vera Campbell '24
Walter Holtgreffe '22
Jacob Orczeck '22
Jessica (Peters) Burkley '21
Jasmine Phillips '23
Stacy Reecks '21
Jacob Shingler '22
George Tice '24
Hannah Uschock '22, Chair
Kylie Vergnola '24

Strategic Planning Committee

Susan Traverso, *President of Thiel College (Co-Chair)*

Mike McKinney '02, *Vice President for Student Life & Dean of Students (Co-Chair)*

Sarahbeth Abalos, *Director of Nursing, Assistant Professor of Nursing*

Greg Butcher, *Associate Academic Dean for Student Success, Professor of Neuroscience*

Liz Frombgen, *Vice President for Academic Affairs & Dean of the College*

Anthony Jones, *Director of the Office of Diversity & Inclusion*

Steve Kandray, *Assistant Professor of Business and Marketing*

Sonya Lapikas, *Director of Admission*

Michelle Lentz, *Instructional Technologist*

Roberta Leonard, *Vice President for College Advancement*

Mike McElroy, *Assistant Director of Digital Engagement*

Sheila Nowinski, *Director, Dietrich Honors Institute, Associate Professor of History*

Ross Nugent, *Assistant Professor of Communication, Chair of Pedas Communication Center*

Liza Schaeff, *Director of the Career Development Center*

Ed Topoleski '02, *Sports Information Director/Associate Athletic Director*

Amy Taczanowsky, *Executive Assistant to the President, Board Liaison*



Community Partners

Rita Clemente, St. Paul's Senior Living Community
Kyle English, Community Foundation of Western PA & Eastern OH
Saleem Ghubril, The Pittsburgh Promise
Brad Gosser, Greenville-Reynolds Development Corp.
Ed Grefenstette, The Dietrich Foundation
Rob Jackson, UPMC Horizon and UPMC Jameson
Ingrid Lundquist, The Marion G. Resch Foundation
Robert Rogalski, Sharon Regional Medical Center
Janice Schwanbeck, Greenville Area Chamber of Commerce
Brian Tokar, Greenville Area School District
Jasson Urey, Town of Greenville
Jeff Wallace, F.N.B. Corporation

Cabinet

Susan Traverso, Ph.D., *President*
Amy Arbogast, *Vice President for Finance and Administration*
Liz Frombgen, Ph. D., *Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dean of the College*
Robertta Leonard, *Vice President for College Advancement*
Mike McKinney '02, *Vice President for Student Life, Dean of Students*
Richard Orr, *Executive Director of Communications and Marketing*
Amy Schafer, *Director of Athletics*
Amy Taczanowsky, *Executive Assistant to the President, Board Liaison*
Ashley Josay Zullo, *Vice President for Enrollment Management*



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“Preparation, I have often said, is rightly
two-thirds of any venture.”

- *Amelia Earhart H'32*



1866 - 2026