

# AQUINAS COLLEGE

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Aquinas College Welcomes Alicia Córdoba as President** *Experienced Administrator, Accomplished Concert Musician Brings More than Two Decades of Mission-Driven Leadership to New Position*

**Grand Rapids, Michigan, May 5, 2022** – After a comprehensive national search, Aquinas College is delighted to welcome Alicia Córdoba as its ninth president.

Córdoba brings more than two decades of experience in Catholic higher education, both as a faculty member and administrator, to her new role leading the nationally ranked liberal arts institution. A mission-driven and motivational leader, Córdoba has broad expertise in strategic planning, financial management and stewardship, curriculum and program design, fundraising, marketing, team building, process improvement and related areas.

Founded by the Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids in 1886, Aquinas has more than 400 faculty and staff serving 1,500 students in an inclusive educational community, offering three graduate programs and 71 undergraduate majors. Working with the entire campus community, president-elect Córdoba will strengthen Aquinas' commitments to a high-quality, distinctive educational experience, inclusion and equity, financial sustainability and service to others, following the example of the Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids and Catholic social teaching.

A native of the Chicago suburbs, Córdoba spent 19 years in faculty and administrative positions of increasing authority at Benedictine University in Lisle, Illinois. She currently serves as associate vice president and Beirne director of the Center for Catholic Studies at St. Mary's University in San Antonio.

A graduate of The Juilliard School where she was the first woman to receive a doctor of musical arts in English horn performance, Córdoba has performed oboe and English horn with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. She holds the position of principal English horn in Sinfonia da Camera, a chamber orchestra at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts in Urbana, Illinois.

President-elect Córdoba begins her tenure at Aquinas College on July 1.

“On behalf of the board of trustees, I am delighted to welcome Dr. Córdoba as the ninth president of Aquinas College,” said Board Chair Marcie Hillary, ’97. “After a rigorous national search, extensive on-campus interviews and prayerful discernment, President-elect Córdoba was the clear and unanimous choice to lead Aquinas College at this pivotal time in higher education.

“Alicia is a servant-leader who brings decades of experience in higher education leadership, demonstrated fundraising success and stewardship, and strong financial acumen within the higher education business model. Her skill set is a perfect match for the criteria we have established for our next president and will be a strong complement to those of our current leadership team.”

Córdoba succeeds Kevin Quinn, who opted not to pursue a renewal of his contract. His tenure was marked by the successful completion of a \$61 million comprehensive campaign, record student retention, successful reaccreditation and recognition by U.S. News & World Report as one of the nation’s leading liberal arts colleges, among others.

“The board is incredibly grateful to President Quinn for his leadership and dedication to the success of Aquinas College over the past five years,” Hillary said. “Responding to the pandemic was a challenge for all of us. We so appreciate Kevin’s focus on student experience and success as the College successfully mitigated spread on campus so students could benefit from an in-class, personal learning environment.”

Aquinas launched a national search in January, engaging Academic Search as a consulting firm. Board members John Lowery and Sam Cummings assembled a 14-member search committee with faculty, staff, students and alumni representatives.

With input from the Aquinas community, the search committee developed a clear leadership agenda and qualifications to further the mission of the College. After an initial virtual interview process, four strong finalists were invited to campus for extensive interviews in mid-April. Córdoba accepted the position in late April.

“I am genuinely humbled and honored to have been selected by the trustees as the ninth president of Aquinas,” President-elect Córdoba said. “From the moment I stepped foot on campus last month, I felt right at home – and I feel equally confident we are going to accomplish many great things together.

“I look forward to supporting Provost Stephen Germic and faculty as they redefine a truly distinctive educational experience for our students. Working with the entire campus community, we will strengthen our commitments to inclusion and equity, sustainability and service, following the example of our Dominican Sisters’ traditions and that of Catholic social teaching and the Catholic intellectual tradition.”

Highlights of President-elect Córdoba’s academic accomplishments include:

- Leading strategic planning, development and implementation as the inaugural Biene director to create the Center for Catholic Studies at St. Mary’s, which

hosts more than 50 annual programs. Secured national and international recognition for the new initiative within its first four years.

- Maintaining more than \$5.4 million in endowed funds for the Center for Catholic Studies, raising funds to ensure continued mission integration throughout the university.
- Serving as chief mission officer of Benedictine University, which had campuses in Illinois and Arizona, satellite sites throughout the U.S. and class sites in China and Vietnam.
- Creating a framework as the inaugural director of the Center for Mission Identity at Benedictine University to bring together all Benedictine universities for an annual conference to discuss the Benedictine hallmarks embedded in the curriculum of each.
- Serving as a tenured professor of music and chair of both the Department of Music and the Department of Fine and Performing Arts at Benedictine University.
- Serving as university liaison to the Dicastery of Human Development as Laudato Si' University for St. Mary's, which placed it among the initial cohort of Catholic universities with the Vatican.

Extremely active professionally, Córdoba writes and presents regularly on topics ranging from mission integration and strategic planning to music curriculum and using the arts to develop critical thinking skills. She holds leadership positions with professional organizations, serving as vice president of the Kappa Gamma Phi Catholic Honor Society and on the National Network Board of the Lilly Fellows Program in Humanities and the Arts and on the board of Collegium.

She is also an active member of the Institute for Administrators in Catholic Education, Association of Catholic Colleges and International Double Reed Society, among many others. Córdoba holds a lifetime membership of Sigma Alpha Iota Music Fraternity.

Córdoba holds a bachelor's and master's of music from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a doctor of musical arts from The Juilliard School.

President-elect Córdoba is married to George Blanchet. The couple have three children, Mary Tait and Jessica and Alexander Blanchet, along with many beloved pets.

For more information about President-elect Córdoba, please visit [aquinas.edu/presidents-office](http://aquinas.edu/presidents-office).

## **About Aquinas College**

Aquinas College is a nationally ranked liberal arts institution serving 1,500 students in an inclusive educational community, offering three graduate programs and 71 undergraduate majors, including a direct-admit bachelor's of nursing from University of Detroit Mercy. All programs are delivered on its beautiful 117-acre tree-filled residential campus in the heart of Grand Rapids, Michigan. A student/faculty ratio of 11:1 provides personalized attention, emphasizing career preparation focused on leadership and

service to others. Founded by the Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids in 1886, Aquinas is western Michigan's only Catholic college, and fosters in its graduates a global perspective and commitment to lifelong learning dedicated to the pursuit of truth and the common good.

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