

2/18/2025

Dear St. Norbert College Community,

It is unusual for the Board of Trustees to communicate so broadly twice in that many weeks, but these are extraordinary times. And more importantly, the faculty's vote demands a strong response from St. Norbert College's highest authority.

But before I deliver that, let me confirm the compassion we feel for every community member. And none has our empathy more than our incredible faculty and staff. Each of us is experiencing tremendous loss. The necessity of these changes does not diminish how painful they are. The fact that our College will be stronger and better in the future because of these difficult decisions does not balm the pain. Given the terminal cost of inaction and the significance of the required changes, it is not surprising that many of us are grieving.

Change of this magnitude naturally causes people to grieve. Grief is a natural response to loss or significant change. Grief causes a multitude of emotions, including sadness, anger, and confusion. Denial is a stage of grief. However, our financial challenges are real and must be addressed. We acknowledge the validity of these emotions and the concerns of our faculty.

Anger is another natural stage, and blaming someone for a loss is common. However, President Laurie Joyner did not create unprecedented and existential challenges in higher education, nor is she responsible for any of St. Norbert College's significant financial challenges. The internal decisions that made our financial situation and the deficits they created predate President Joyner. The unjust and vicious attacks on her are anathema to the values, culture, and ethics of St. Norbert College.

During the past year, President Joyner and her leadership team have made considerable progress in addressing the College's substantial and long-developing financial and operational challenges.

The Board of Trustees again proclaims its unwavering support for President Joyner. Her efforts align with the Board and Sponsor's direction, and she has earned our full faith and confidence.

We stand with President Joyner, confident in her ability to lead us through these challenging times.

We are deeply disappointed by the vote of no confidence. This vote, unfortunately, adds to the misguided and misinformed campaign attempting to diminish President Joyner's efforts and trust in her leadership. We stand firmly with President Joyner, and we urge the community to see the bigger picture and the progress we have made under her leadership.

Votes of no confidence have become weapons of resistance rather than genuine warnings of leadership failure. We call on faculty, staff, students, and alumni to focus on constructive engagement—working with the administration to navigate challenges rather than seeking to delay, deny, and delegitimize the leadership charged with enacting essential changes to ensure St. Norbert College continues its inspiring mission. We are committed to working together and fostering a culture of collaboration and unity.

While these votes have lost the power they once had, this vote harms our mission and our College.

Thanks to the difficult but necessary work being done today, St. Norbert College will continue to be a Norbertine, Catholic, and liberal arts college for another 125 years. It will take every one of us working together to accomplish what is required. And while we sympathize with our faculty, their vote was wrong. The Board of Trustees fully supports President Joyner as she continues working to secure St. Norbert College's future. We are committed to preserving and advancing the legacy of this great institution, and we ask our faculty, staff, and students to join us in this commitment.

We remain rooted in faith, committed to excellence, and united in purpose,

Chair

St. Norbert College Board of Trustees

2/10/2025

Dear St. Norbert College Community,

Higher education is undergoing seismic shifts—declining enrollment, financial constraints, digital disruption, economic pressures, and shifting student demographics. In the face of these challenges, decisive leadership is crucial.

The retrenchment process that we approved last year is underway. The faculty has provided their recommendations for program discontinuation, the deans have been involved in ongoing consultation, and the governance system has engaged with the administration regarding program elimination and the criteria for faculty termination as outlined in the Faculty Handbook. Dr. Martin Conley is finalizing her recommendations. As of yet, the president has not received final recommendations.

As an alumna, I can state with authority that St. Norbert College is a truly special place. This year marks my 20th year as an active member of this community, having served two tours on the Board of Trustees. Over these decades, I have had lifelong friendships with students, faculty, staff, and other alumni. I empathize with faculty and the campus community as efforts continue to align revenue and expenses after multiple years of not doing so. While losing faculty members who have earned our admiration is painful, the reality is that not addressing the well-documented challenges facing higher education will result in greater threats to our sacred mission and beloved College.

As the governing body with fiduciary responsibility and a moral obligation to steward the mission and long-term success of St. Norbert College, the Board of Trustees reaffirms its unwavering support for President Laurie Joyner. We selected President Joyner because of her experience and integrity. She is mission-focused and recognized for her leadership and record of consistently exceeding goals and expectations. Her efforts are aligned with what the Board and Sponsor have directed, and we have full confidence in her.

We share this endorsement in response to the orchestrated campaign aimed at diminishing President Joyner's efforts and confidence in her leadership. These efforts are unjustified and deeply counterproductive at a time when our shared focus must be on securing the College's best future. As a reminder, the challenges that "Preserving the St. Norbert Legacy: A Shared Promise of Stewardship" addresses were present and festering at St. Norbert College before the Board's first interview with President Joyner. We stand firmly with President Joyner and her leadership team as they continue the difficult, but necessary, work of our College.

During the past year, the College has made considerable progress in addressing its long-developing financial and operational challenges. Among these achievements:

Stabilizing the College's Financial Future

- Implemented nearly \$12 million in budget adjustments, a critical step toward long-term financial sustainability.

- Balanced the FY24 budget and are on track to balance the FY25 budget while taking proactive steps to address a projected \$7 million deficit in FY26.
- Implemented multiple strategic initiatives, including athletics optimization and the RIZE partnership, to generate new revenue that are showing promising signs of growth.

Academic Excellence and Program Innovation

- Expanded faculty-driven academic offerings to better align with student interests.
- Introduced new program offerings through an innovative partnership, expanding options for SNC students to graduate with skills that prepare them for success.
- Protected the integrity of our liberal arts mission—every student will continue to engage in a broad-based education with courses spanning the humanities, arts, natural sciences, and social sciences.

Demonstrated a Commitment to Transparency and Shared Governance

- Established clear, consistent, ongoing communication channels, including a dedicated landing page on the website, town halls, individual meetings, emails, videos, and faculty governance engagement, ensuring a collaborative approach to institutional decision-making.
- Adhered to SNC Faculty Handbook protocols for retrenchment, ensuring fairness, transparency, and respect in every decision.

We call on faculty, staff, students, and alumni to focus on constructive engagement—working with the administration to navigate challenges rather than seeking to delay, deny, and delegitimize the leadership charged with enacting essential changes required to ensure SNC continues its inspiring mission for another 125 years.

This is a call for cooperation and to turn away from the divisive actions and communication that have recently plagued us and are harming our beloved College. Perpetuating misinformation is unfortunate and amplifies the emotion and anxiety across constituent groups. This is dangerous in many ways and tragic as the College is working hard to provide students with the best learning experience possible while keeping SNC accessible and affordable.

In today's higher education landscape, survival depends on adaptability, collaboration, and mission-driven leadership. It will take every one of us working together to accomplish what is required to nurture and position the College for the coming decades.

There is so much excellent work to build on at the College. The Board is grateful to the campus community for its hard work and incredible accomplishments. Each time we meet, we review the incredible points of pride that are the culmination of our community's collective talent and collaborative effort. We have much to celebrate at SNC: national rankings of excellence; expanded academic and athletic initiatives producing promising results; and the launch of an exciting web redesign this summer that authentically embodies the ethos of the College. Not to mention the incredible stories about student achievements and what our impressive graduates go on to accomplish in their communities and careers.

The Board of Trustees fully supports President Joyner as she continues working with those who share the objective of securing St. Norbert College's future. We applaud those who are exhibiting professionalism and patience as we engage the retrenchment process in good faith, according to the Faculty Handbook. We ask our faculty, staff, students, and alumni to reject destructive rhetoric. Join us in advancing the legacy of this great Catholic, Norbertine, and liberal arts institution.

Together, we will emerge stronger.

Patti Brash McKeithan

Chair

St. Norbert College Board of Trustees