

# THE AIM HIGHER FOUNDATION

*2021-2022 Annual Report*



## A LETTER FROM

*Ricky Austin, President, and Don Mulligan, Board Chair*

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Dear Friends,

With heartfelt gratitude for all of our supporters, the Aim Higher Foundation is pleased to present its Annual Report for 2021-22, a year marked by conviction in our mission, extraordinary generosity, and pride in the children we support.

It has also been a year marked by signs of evolution and growth. At the Aim Higher Foundation, we concluded our first ever fundraising campaign, raising more than \$13.5 million. We awarded more scholarships than ever before. And we entered a new era of leadership as Don Mulligan began his term as chair of the board and Ricky Austin took on the role of President.

This past year has also been a milestone opportunity to look back at our first decade awarding tuition assistance. It is striking to note just how different the state of Catholic schools is now compared to ten years ago.

Back in 2012, Catholic schools across the country were in their 55th year of, on average, a two percent annual enrollment decline. Ten years ago, we were in a period of time where more than 2,000 Catholic schools in the United States closed.

The challenges of ten years ago weren't related to the quality of the schools, their academic rigor, or the strength of their character and faith formation initiatives.

Instead, Catholic schools and the families they serve had been stuck in a half-century long tug-of-war between a commitment to keep their doors open to children of all backgrounds and the strain of healthy operating budgets. As the numbers of religious women and men who founded and ran Catholic schools declined, the need to charge families tuition in order to employ lay teachers created a seemingly impossible question to answer: how do Catholic schools remain accessible and affordable to children regardless of the size of their parents' paycheck?

Ten years ago, the founding board members of the Aim Higher Foundation proposed an answer: Our "one thing." We provide scholarships to children whose parents and guardians can't afford the full cost of tuition.

Since then, we have seen nothing short of a Catholic school renaissance, a new and renewed urgency to confront the challenges and reverse them. Thanks to our many partners and friends, as well as the tireless efforts of today's Catholic school teachers and leaders, enrollment in K-8 Catholic schools has rebounded. Demand for a Catholic education is up. And thanks to you, the Aim Higher Foundation continues to grow, empowering even more families with the opportunity to provide their children with the gift of a Catholic education.

*Ricky Austin*  
*President*

*Don Mulligan*  
*Chair of the Board*



## WHO WE ARE

*The Aim Higher Foundation seeks to ensure that all children, regardless of their background, can access the life-changing benefits of a Catholic education.*

## WHAT WE DO

*The Aim Higher Foundation provides \$1,000 scholarships to students from families with a demonstrated financial need who seek a K-8 Catholic education in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis. This scholarship continues each year, until the student reaches high school.*

*“We are so grateful that Aim Higher has helped so many families access a Catholic education... These students have the opportunity to know God and grow in their faith all while receiving an excellent education in academics. This experience is life changing!”*

*Bonnie Jungels, Principal*

NOTRE DAME ACADEMY

## A PLACE TO THRIVE: *The Success of Catholic Schools*

The value of a Catholic education is prevalent now more than ever. According to the National Assessment of Education Progress, Catholic school students performed at or near the top in reading and math in a recent assessment of student achievement. Commonly known as “the Nation’s Report Card,” NAEP’s 2022 data illustrates that **if all Catholic schools were a state, their 1.6 million students would rank number one in the nation.**

The Catholic school commitment toward serving underprivileged students is also evident in the NAEP numbers. Learning outcomes for students receiving free and reduced-price lunch were highest for students in Catholic schools. When disaggregated by race, the data also specifies that Black and Hispanic students in a Catholic school showed marked increase in their overall achievement.

As interest in Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis continues to grow, so does the need for financial aid. **It’s the goal of the Aim Higher Foundation to ensure that all children can access the academically robust curriculum and spiritually enriching experience that accompanies a K-8 Catholic education.**

It is also our goal to see to it that students can stay enrolled in their Catholic school. Aim Higher Scholarships, once awarded, follow students from kindergarten through 8th Grade, allowing each recipient to receive an additional scholarship each year until they begin high school.

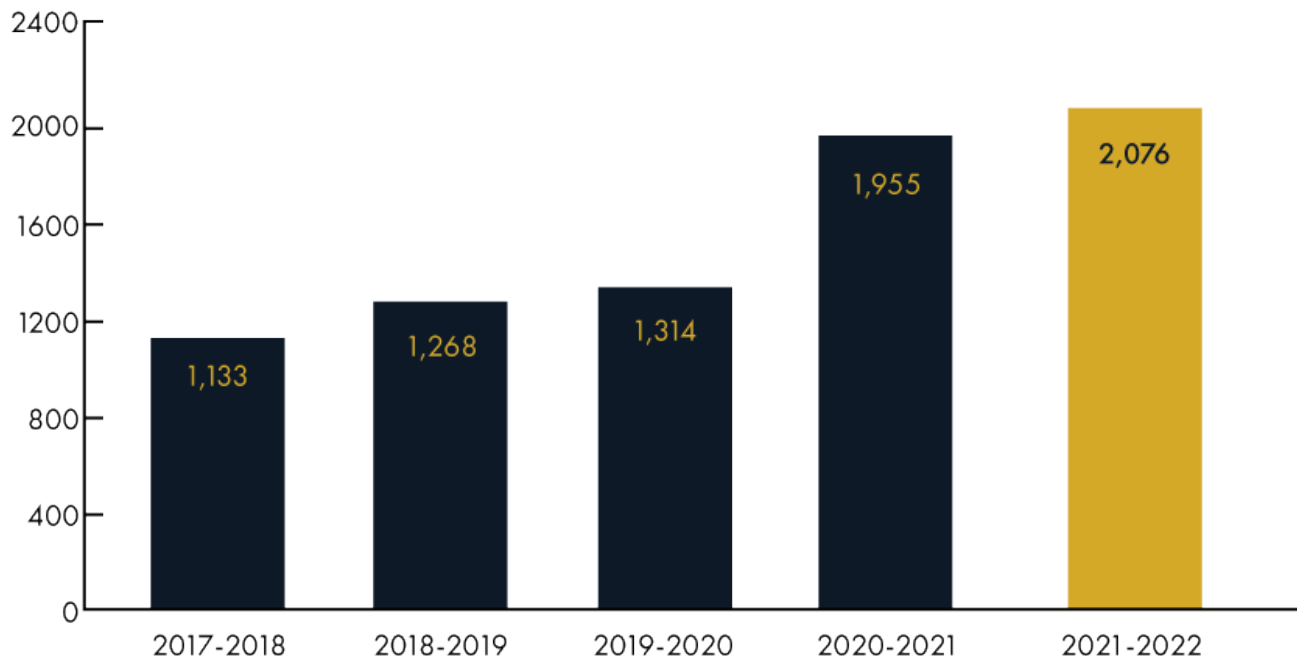




# GROWING SCHOLAR SUPPORT

*Thanks to a steadily growing base of support, the foundation continues its quest to increase the number of scholarships awarded each year.*

*In school year 2021-2022, we awarded  
**2,076 needs-based scholarships**  
to students in 82 local Catholic schools.*



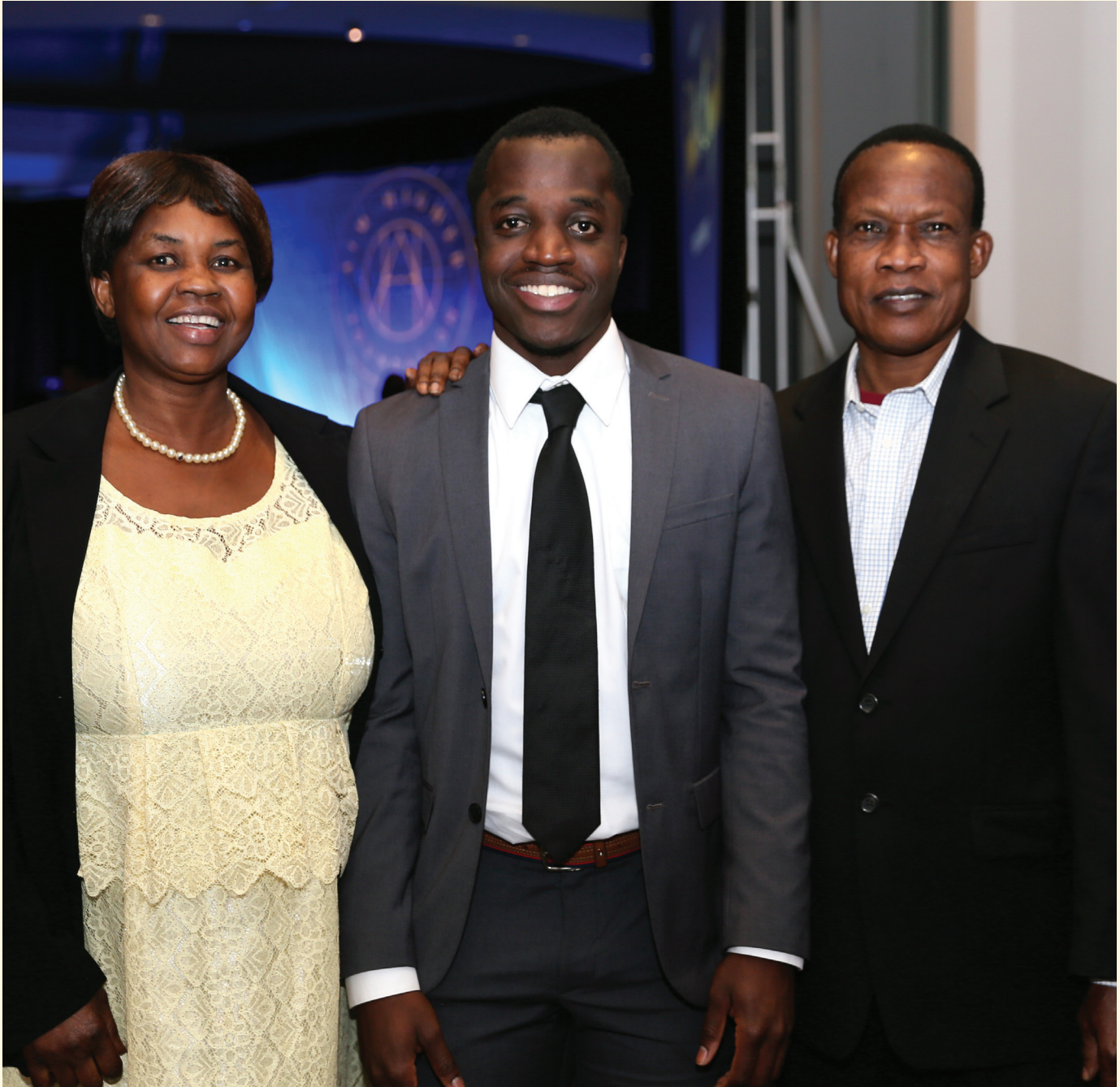
## A NEW CHAPTER: *Success from an Aim Higher Graduate*

Daniel Alimo's story begins in Cairo, Egypt. He, along with his family, fled war-torn South Sudan in search of a better, more peaceful life, and they landed in a snow-laden place called Minnesota. Daniel's father, Christopher, understood the importance of a quality education, so finding a suitable school for his children was of utmost importance. As recent immigrants, a private Catholic education seemed an impossible option, until the family discovered the Aim Higher Foundation.

**The scholarships that Daniel and his brothers received through Aim Higher began a new chapter** for the Alimo family at Nativity of Mary in Bloomington.

“Nativity of Mary had high standards,” says Daniel. “They taught me to value education and faith, and the mindsets of my fellow students pushed me to do even better.” Daniel continued his quest for excellence by attending a Catholic high school, as well. “Academy of Holy Angels saw something in me that I couldn't quite see in myself at the time,” he says. “The environment challenged students to strive for the highest standards.” So that's just what Daniel did.

Now a senior at Drake University with a bright future in marketing and economics, **Daniel attributes much of his success to the Aim Higher Foundation and his Catholic schooling.** “Education is a powerful tool, and a Catholic education is even more powerful. It changes lives.” And for many, it rewrites their story—with a very happy ending.





## WE GIVE IN ORDER TO CHANGE LIVES:

*Dan and Sarah Schumacher*

We support the Aim Higher Foundation because we believe that Catholic education can change the trajectory of a life, particularly in the early years where a child's belief in themselves and their potential are often shaped. Aim Higher gives any child, no matter their financial circumstance, the opportunity to learn at a school that nourishes their whole self: mind, body, and spirit.

Catholic schools are known for academic excellence, including higher graduation rates and higher test scores. Recent times have highlighted the growing disparity that exists between communities and the limited educational options for too many. Aim Higher removes an obstacle for parents and allows them to choose the best school for their family while being reassured that Aim Higher will provide that scholarship year over year through the eighth grade.

We were both blessed to attend Catholic elementary schools, and we valued our ability to choose a Catholic education for our own four children. There we were always reminded of our call to serve one another. We believe our gift to Aim Higher will give more parents the opportunity to make that choice for their children.

*Dan and Sarah Schumacher*

*“You make very special and purposeful sacrifices to send your kids to a Catholic school, so the Aim Higher Foundation has been such a blessing for us. We’re proud to be able to have our kids get a Catholic education, and we are thousands of dollars grateful to Aim Higher for making our kids’ and our family’s dream for them a reality.”*

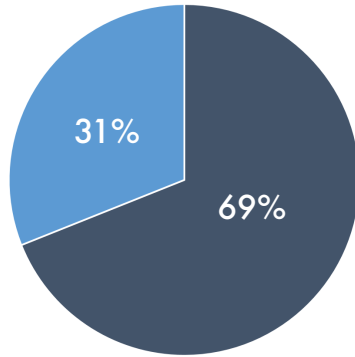
*Suzanne Garcia*

PARENT OF AIM HIGHER SCHOLARS

# FINANCIAL POSITION:

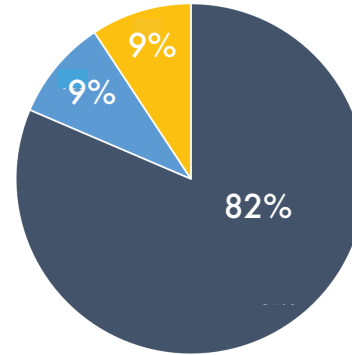
*Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2022*

Total Income  
\$3.2M



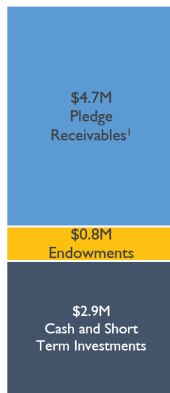
■ Collection of Campaign Pledges  
■ Annual and Foundation Giving

Total Expenses  
\$2.7M



■ Scholarship Programs  
■ Fundraising Expenses  
■ Administrative Expenses

Total Assets  
\$8.4M



Future Scholarships<sup>2</sup>  
\$8.8M



**Footnote 1:**

Pledge receivables are projected to be collected through FY 2024-25

**Footnote 2:**

\$2.1M reflects the funds committed to scholars in the 2022-23 school year. The funds committed to future years are to support those same students through 8th grade

The results reported are non-GAAP using a modified cash basis of accounting to represent the cash received and paid during the year. Audited statements are available by emailing [info@aimhigherfoundation.org](mailto:info@aimhigherfoundation.org)

# THE SECRET TO AIMING HIGHER:

## *Our One Thing*

The Aim Higher Foundation does one thing. The foundation provides needs-based scholarships directly to students to help them access K-8 Catholic education within the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis. **To meet the varied needs of the families we support, the Aim Higher Foundation delivers scholarships through five different programs.**

- The **Aim Higher Foundation Scholarship** is a \$1,000 student-based scholarship awarded to K-8 students from families with demonstrated financial need. Once awarded, this scholarship follows the student each year, up to and through 8th grade, as long as the yearly financial aid application continues to show need.
- The **Catholic Services Appeal Foundation/Aim Higher Foundation Scholarship** is a \$1,000 student-based scholarship awarded to five students in grades K-8 from families with demonstrated financial need at each eligible Catholic school. Through a unique partnership, CSAF funds these scholarships and the Aim Higher Foundation awards the scholarships.



- The **Drexel Mission Schools Scholarship** extends the Aim Higher Foundation’s vision to help all children access a Catholic school by empowering schools designated as “mission schools” by the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis to attract and retain students. This additional round of funding aims to give prospective families with limited means the financial confidence they need to consider Catholic education.

- The **John M. Nasseff Scholarship** is administered by the Aim Higher Foundation and is awarded to children from families with demonstrated financial need at eligible schools in Saint Paul. In 2018, following Mr. Nasseff’s distinguished lifetime of service and philanthropy, family and friends established this scholarship, mirroring John’s love for Saint Paul and its children.

- The **Reserve Fund Scholarship**, available outside of the Aim Higher Foundation’s normal application and awarding timelines, is provided to families experiencing sudden and unexpected financial hardships. This scholarship ensures students can remain enrolled in a Catholic school while their families deal with crises at hand.

## MEET OUR TEAM: *We Can't Wait to Connect*

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### **Ricky Austin, President**

Ricky stepped into the role of President of the Aim Higher Foundation in August of 2022. Joining the foundation in 2017 as Director of Programs and Communications and later as Vice President of Advancement and Operations, Ricky has been instrumental in expanding the reach of the organization's mission that aims to transform children's lives through access to quality K-8 Catholic education.

### **Laura Hester, Director of Scholarship Programs**

As Director of Scholarships Programs, Laura leads the management and operations of the foundation's five scholarship programs. She works with schools and their families to ensure accessibility to the foundation's scholarship opportunities. Often this work involves addressing language, cultural, and technology-access barriers.

### **Camille Kiolbasa, Director of Advancement, Fundraising Strategy**

As Director of Advancement, Fundraising Strategy, Camille supports the advancement efforts of the Aim Higher Foundation and guides marketing and communication efforts. Camille works with staff and friends of the foundation to cultivate and steward mission supporters. She also leads grant writing initiatives.

### **Rebecca Onnen, Office Manager and Administrative Assistant**

As Office Manager and Administrative Assistant, Rebecca provides support to the Aim Higher Foundation Board of Directors, Committees, and President and leads the management of the office. Rebecca is the primary point of contact for team operations, external contractors, internal records, and calendars. She is the first voice you will hear on the phone and the day-to-day engine of the foundation's mission-driven work.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Don L. Mulligan, chair  
Jeff Cachat  
Joseph P. Donnelly  
Yen Fasano  
Paul Herro  
Barry Lieske  
Philip J. Paquette (*term completed December 2021*)  
Karen M. Rauenhorst  
Margaret Requet  
Aida Schaefer  
Mary E. Schaffner  
Sarah Schumacher  
Rev. John L. Ubel

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Jean Houghton, ex officio  
(*term completed August 25, 2022*)  
Ricky Austin, ex officio  
(*term commenced August 26, 2022*)

*Joined 2023*  
Fr. Christopher Collins  
Jacquelyn Daylor

### *Emeritus*

Kathy Dougherty  
John McMahon  
Doug Milroy  
Michael O'Connell  
Mark Rauenhorst  
Sam Salas

### **Committee Members**

Angela Dimler, Development  
Jane McDonald Black, Scholarships  
Emily Howald Sefton, Development  
Steve Sefton, Finance

### *Joined 2023*

Tom Margarit, Finance

The Aim Higher Foundation supports all Catholic schools  
serving grades K-8 in the  
Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.



Aim Higher Foundation  
2610 University Ave W, Suite 525  
Saint Paul, MN 55114  
[info@aimhigherfoundation.org](mailto:info@aimhigherfoundation.org) | 612-819-6711