



**Remarks of Gregory W. Powell
Harold Alfond Foundation**

**Thomas College
Guarantee the Future Campaign Celebration Event
Waterville, Maine**

**Thursday, October 13, 2022
6:00 p.m.**

Good evening and thank you, Laurie, for inviting me to join you for this terrific celebration. Your words and those of Chairman Ayotte and our student speakers say so much for the wonderful qualities and accomplishments of this college.

As your closing speaker, let me say a few words about why Harold Alfond and his foundation are so proud of this college and grateful to its supporters, leadership, faculty, and staff. We love teamwork, and here at Thomas, teamwork is on display big-time.

Back in 2020, the Foundation awarded Thomas the largest gift in the college's history. We did this, as the pandemic surged, to kick off this campaign, which at that time had a goal of \$27M.

Tonight, as the pandemic recedes, we celebrate a campaign which, despite the pandemic, raised over \$30 million dollars – a record – and did it thanks to you all. Now that's teamwork!

As remarkable as this success is – it would not have been surprising to Harold Alfond and is not to those of us who carry out his legacy. We have always seen in Thomas what President Lachance has already described – a great team of dedicated supporters with the tenacity of a terrier working relentlessly to educate students – most the first in their families to attend college – in a vibrant, intimate, and nurturing place.

Will Rogers liked to say, "It ain't bragging if it's true." So, let's do a little truthful bragging about Thomas, its leadership, and just a few of the many great accomplishments your donations have made possible.

First, of course, is the beautiful new Sukeforth Family Sports Center! Wow! What a great addition to campus.

This is a great moment to ask Mr. and Mrs. Sukeforth to stand and be given a hearty round of applause.

Second, Thomas has continued its creative and dedicated commitment to student success with relevant experiential education. With your dollars, Thomas has created an unparalleled new suite of student support programs to ensure high-quality learning, student well-being, and career readiness – ranging from college navigation services, to digital badges in career-ready competencies led by the Innovation Institute and Mike Duguay. The latest example from the Lunder School, always responsive to the needs of this community, Thomas students will now serve as substitute teachers in area school systems facing acute teacher shortages.

Third, keeping Thomas students in school has been a critical objective of the college.

This fall, Thomas had a record retention rate – boosting retention by over 10%.

Fourth, even on the heels of a worldwide pandemic, while other colleges and universities are struggling with enrollment, this fall Thomas has earned a 19% increase in new undergraduate enrollment and a 48% increase in graduate program enrollment.

Fifth, the leadership and resiliency of leadership at Thomas is, and has been, extraordinary. Nowhere will you find two individuals more dedicated to the vision and success of a college than at Thomas with Conrad Ayotte and Todd Smith. And how about our President.

Across the country, college presidents – bending to the strains of the pandemic – are stepping down left and right. Not here. Not at Thomas. Laurie LaChance has stepped up big-time, facing down the challenges of the pandemic and pushing and pulling the college to new heights. All with her characteristic warmth, caring, and commitment to building the future of Thomas students. Thank you, Conrad, Todd, and Laurie!

There is much more one could say about Thomas, its leadership, and the accomplishments your support have made possible. All truthful bragging. But let me leave you with this. Today, we are immersed in a world of swirling social media, email, twitter, and zoom.

A world in which divisiveness is rampant and in which experts have thought electronic contact has displaced the intimacy and warmth of true personal contact and the understanding and compassion of others it brings to our lives.

Here at Thomas, you have supported an institution that is built upon the value of education in a personal, intimate, connected environment. A place where every faculty member's

door is open. Where students, faculty, administration, and staff are together in this place to support, grow, and learn together. It's a beautiful thing here at Thomas.

I hear it again and again, I see it every time I am on campus, and I tell everyone this myself: Thomas is a special place – a small but mighty institution providing enormous benefit and value for Maine students, the local Waterville community, and the state of Maine.

On a visit to campus this spring, I had the pleasure of lunching with students, and I remember so well one who told me how wonderful it was to be at Thomas and how she and her fellow students struggled with the challenges of the pandemic and its way of pulling them apart. She said, "Covid took so much from us, but care and love for each other never went away."

"Covid is going away," she told me, "And we could all feel it just yesterday. It was one of those warm spring days when your hope for summer rises. The masks were gone. The grass was splotchy, but it was that bright spring green. We were all out on the quad, studying, laughing, talking. Frisbees were flying. Caesar the camel had been for a visit along with Eeyore the donkey. We were together. We were together at our college."

So, folks, you are supporting so much at this special place including that student and her classmates on the quad and in the classroom. At the Harold Alfond Foundation, we are enormously grateful to you for your partnership and support of Thomas.

Congratulations! And thank you.