



JOHN J. HURLEY

*President, Canisius College*



John J. Hurley assumed his position as the 24th president of Canisius College on July 1, 2010. He is the first lay president in Canisius College's 150-year history. Since becoming president, Hurley has led Canisius through a series of bold, comprehensive strategic assessments of academic programs and administrative functions aimed at enhancing academic excellence and the student experience, while stabilizing the college's financial position.

In 2010, on the heels of the great recession, Hurley recognized that Canisius would feel the impacts of the coming disruption in higher education and needed to adjust accordingly. Hurley began his tenure as president by identifying for the campus a range of opportunities, macro and micro trends, and the issues and concerns they presented for the college. He used this in campus-wide conversations with academic departments and operating units to stimulate dialogue about a path forward for the college. This initial outreach exemplified what became a hallmark of Hurley's leadership style: confront the stark realities before you and inspire hope and creativity in developing solutions. Facing the truth meant a more data informed approach and concrete strategies and measurable goals to achieve results. He stressed the importance of working in a more collaborative, cross-functional way.

As president, he oversaw the successful development and execution of two strategic plans, *A Transformational Education* (approved in 2011) and *Canisius 150: Excellence, Leadership, Jesuit* (approved in 2016), that built upon Canisius' commitment to academic excellence, Jesuit values of social justice, and innovation. The latter also saw the completion of a new Facilities Master Plan and the college's first-ever plans for Environmental Sustainability and for Racial Equity and Inclusion.

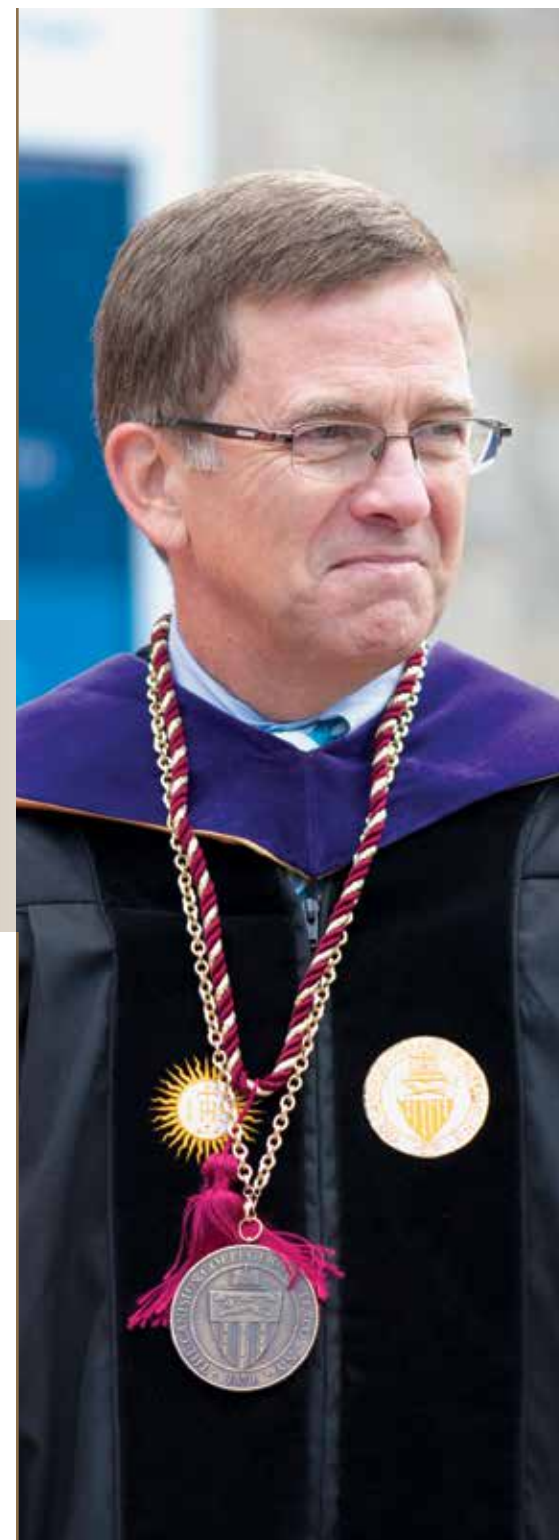


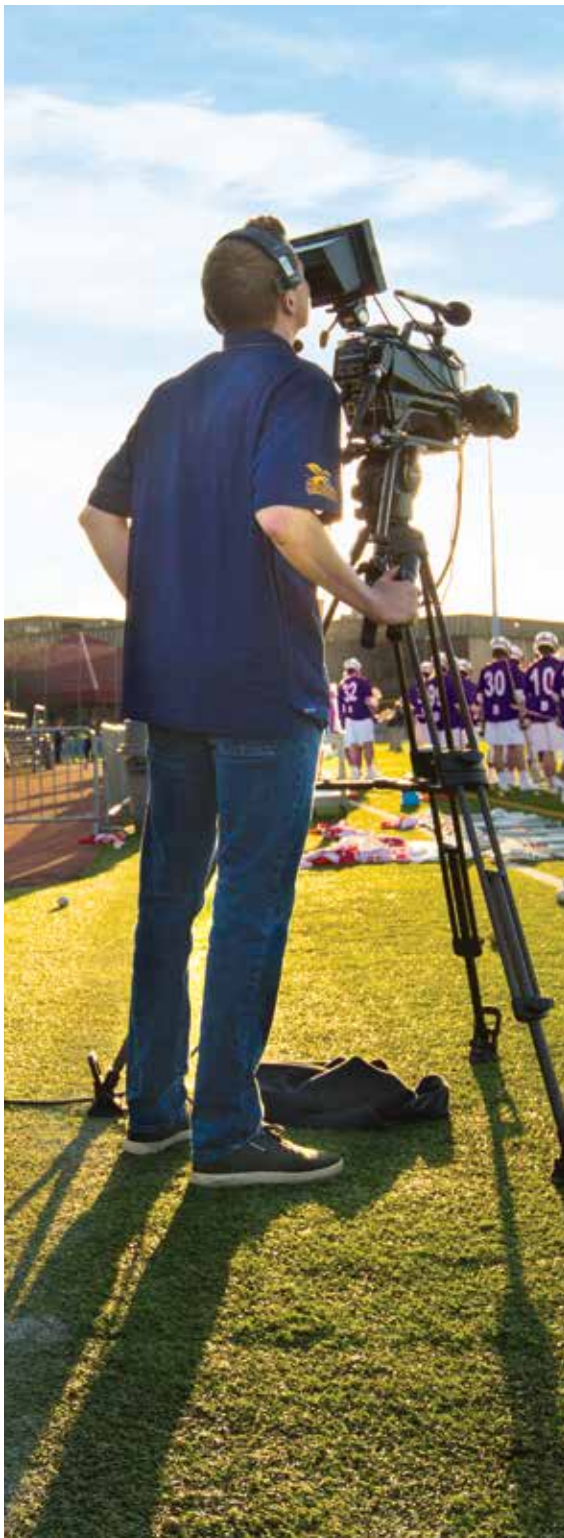
...confront the stark realities before you and inspire hope and creativity in developing solutions.

Even with well-conceived plans in place, the pathway forward has not always been clearly marked and the college was forced to continually react and adapt. In each case, Hurley worked with the college's Board of Trustees and the campus community to make the difficult but necessary decisions to preserve the well-being of the college and advance its mission. In implementing its plans, the college demonstrated both a persistence and a nimbleness in addressing this very challenging period in Canisius' history. Guided by a desire to see Canisius as an effective partner in students' progress toward lives of meaning and purpose, Hurley drove the college to renew constantly its educational promise to all those it served.

These principles and actions ultimately formed the pillars of his legacy at Canisius: academic revitalization and innovation, development of a more student-centered experience, restructuring the college's business model, and constantly elevating the Jesuit mission.

In 2012, Hurley and the Board of Trustees retained the Pappas Consulting Group to conduct a strategic assessment of the college. They looked at enrollment, financial aid, academic programs, staffing levels, teaching loads, fundraising, operations, and facilities. Their final report forced the college to assess where it found itself and outlined opportunities to optimize revenue and minimize expenses. The Pappas Report became the driver for the development of a comprehensive strategy that focused on a better balance of faculty-student resources, financial aid, retention, staffing, athletics, fundraising, administrative operations and facilities to right-size the college for the future.





Hurley proceeded in the hopes that Canisius would thrive in the disruptive environment by adopting innovative business practices and pursuing strategic alliances. In 2017, Canisius reset its tuition to 2008 levels, reducing its tuition by 23 percent when it launched *Excellence Within Reach* to make the cost of a Canisius education more accessible. In 2018, he developed a collaboration with SUNY Erie Community College to house some of its students on the Canisius campus and make campus services and activities available to Erie Community College students. Earlier, the college had sponsored a similar arrangement with SUNY Buffalo State College. In 2019, Canisius partnered with the Catholic Health System to provide space in Science Hall for its development of a comprehensive electronic health records system. The collaboration presented an opportunity to develop a talent pipeline between students and Catholic Health.

Steps toward redefining what it means to be student-centered resulted in the development of the GriffCenter for Student Success as a hub of excellence for creative approaches to student retention, academic support, advisement, career services, and linking academic programs to the employment market. The Student Records and Financial Services Center was created to co-locate the services of financial aid, the registrar, and bursar offices in a single suite to bring improved service levels and added convenience to students and families.

Academic innovation and revitalization came in many forms over the past 11 years. Since 2010, Canisius has introduced or modified more than 50 undergraduate, graduate and certificate programs, many in online or hybrid formats, to meet student needs and interests and respond to market demands. Over the same period, Canisius also enhanced high-impact experiential learning opportunities for students through service-learning, faculty-student research, internships and pre-professional studies. Canisius partnered with the University at Buffalo School of Law to offer an accelerated option for those who want to earn a bachelor's degree and *juris* doctor degree in six years. Hurley also encouraged collaboration between intercollegiate athletics and academics in the creation of the sports broadcast journalism concentration and a new Golden Griffin Sports Broadcast Center to produce events for ESPN3.





Articulation agreements with key community colleges were expanded and updated. In partnership with faculty, Hurley helped launch the signature Urban Leadership Learning Community program. Established in 2000 with significant foundation backing, the program provides academically talented students from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds from the Buffalo area with scholarship support and an opportunity to participate in a collaborative learning model and service to help them achieve their academic and leadership potential. The program has received national recognition and has graduated more than 170 students over the past two decades.

Under Hurley's direction, Canisius took its first steps into the allied health field, a process four years in the making, with its introduction of a Physician Assistant Studies Program in 2021. He led the first phases of the redevelopment of Science Hall, which came to house the college's Institute for Autism Research and catapulted this cutting-edge research and treatment program into the top tier of federal



and private grant-funded programs in the United States. He also placed special emphasis on the development of creative professional and personal development courses to advance life-long learning. High-demand, data-driven graduate programs in Data Analytics, Cybersecurity, and Business Analytics were introduced. And even as demographic shifts and student interest in the liberal arts caused some slowing in enrollment in the humanities, Hurley always emphasized the importance of the core curriculum as the defining element of a Canisius education.

Hurley has long been recognized within the Jesuit network and among Catholics as a layperson with an extraordinary depth of understanding of Catholic and Jesuit mission and identity. He has written and spoken extensively on the topic. In the face of a dwindling number of Jesuits on the campus, Hurley has underscored that the college's Catholic, Jesuit mission and identity should be "vitaly present and operative" in all that Canisius does. He created the first office of Mission & Identity

in 2011 to ensure that Canisius faculty, staff, students, alumni and trustees had opportunities to deepen their understanding of the institution's identity, its educational mission and their roll in its fulfillment. He worked with the Board of Trustees to provide formation for trustees in mission and to develop strong working relationships between the college and its board, the resident Jesuit community and the Jesuits' USA East Province. He led the college's Mission Priority Examen process in 2018, which revealed an abundance of ways in which Canisius animates its mission through service, academics, and ministry. The process resulted in the reaffirmation of Canisius as a Catholic, Jesuit institution by the Superior General of the Jesuits.

Hurley has connected his devotion to the college's Jesuit mission through a strong emphasis on standing in solidarity with people at the margins. He has helped lead student, parent and faculty immersion trips to El Salvador, Nicaragua, the Philippines and the Arizona-Mexico border. He is an active supporter of Agros International, a Seattle-based non-governmental organization devoted to the development of sustainable agricultural communities in Central America, the Centro Arte para la Paz in Suchitoto, El Salvador, and St. Luke's Mission of Mercy here in Buffalo. He was an early subscriber to the college and university Presidents' Pledge Against Global Poverty.

Throughout Hurley's tenure at Canisius, he has always placed a special emphasis on the college's connection to the City of Buffalo, and in particular, to the college's Hamlin Park neighborhood in north central Buffalo. Hurley was the architect of three innovative programs that contributed significantly to the historic areas surrounding the college. As a vice president in 2002, Hurley created the college's innovative Employer Assisted Housing Program, which offers employees grants in the form of forgivable loans to assist them with the purchase of homes near the college's central Buffalo campus. Since its inception, 49 employees have benefited from the program with more than \$270,000 in loan funds distributed. In 2010, he announced the Hamlin Park Initiative as a way of renovating and selling 10 college houses on neighboring streets to buyers who agreed to be owner-occupiers for at least 15 years. Canisius invested \$500,000 of its own money in renovations of the houses before sale and the initiative stabilized and strengthened the residential character of the neighborhood. The college worked with Habitat for Humanity to transfer two additional houses to Habitat families.





Hurley also directed the development of the college's New Buffalo Institute to align the college's extensive outreach activities toward defined areas of focus to address the persistent challenges and injustices in the community, with an emphasis on the East Side of Buffalo. Strongly aligned with the mission, the college advanced its efforts to enhance diversity and inclusion on campus with the establishment of a dedicated position to oversee campus-wide programs and services that promote diversity, inclusion, equity and social justice.

Hurley is recognized as one of the most innovative and successful fundraisers in the community. Since joining the college in 1997, Hurley helped Canisius to raise more than \$200 million from donors, corporations, foundations and government sources. His first campaign, *Imagine Canisius*, raised more than \$39 million for capital improvement projects, and *A Legacy of Leadership: The Campaign for Canisius College*,

the college's first comprehensive fundraising campaign, concluded on May 31, 2012 with a record \$95.5 million raised, surpassing the goal for the campaign by \$5.5 million. Today, the endowment stands at \$160 million, more than double its \$74.4 million value in 2010.

Hurley has been at the helm of transformative investments in the campus footprint, including the development of 120,000 sq. ft. of science and community space in Science Hall, Library Learning Commons, the expansion of the Nelson D. Civello '67 Financial Markets Lab, the virtual gross anatomy lab and teaching spaces for the Physician Assistant Studies program, creation of the Penfold-Gareis Fitness Center and the air conditioning of the Koessler Athletic Center. His fundraising led to a significant expansion of endowments for financial aid scholarships and programs, and academic innovation that are a hallmark of an excellent university.



The greatest test of Hurley's leadership over the past 11 years unquestionably has been the Covid-19 pandemic. The health and well-being of the campus community were the first priority. In March 2020, the college paused all on-campus operations and shifted to its academic contingency plan that caused all students to move to online learning in spring 2020 and eventually to a multi-modal format during the 2020-21 academic year. Enrollment shortfalls, revenue losses and expense increases had the college projecting a \$20 million budget deficit in the summer of 2020. Hurley worked with the Board to restructure the college's operation, eliminate and outsource operations, and terminate under-enrolled academic programs. *The Buffalo News* in a July 24 editorial said, "Hurley is doing the difficult but necessary work of shaping the institution of the future. If he doesn't do it now, a more difficult job will await later. Hurley is willing to enact the kind of bold reinvention that will sustain and grow the college into the future. He deserves the community's – and college's – support."

Prior to his appointment as president, Hurley served as executive vice president of Canisius from 2007 to 2010 and vice president for college relations from 1997 to 2010. In these positions, he played a significant leadership role in the college's investment in the campus, which now totals more than \$175 million since 1997.

A native of Buffalo, Hurley is a graduate of St. Benedict's Elementary School, St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute, Canisius College (BA 1978 *summa cum laude*, English/history) and the University of Notre Dame Law School (JD 1981). Prior to coming to Canisius, he practiced law for 16 years, three with the firm of Keck, Mahin & Cate in Chicago and 13 with Phillips, Lytle LLP in Buffalo concentrating his practice in the areas of secured lending, bankruptcy and insolvency.

Hurley has been active in numerous educational associations including the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities and the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities. He has chaired reaccreditation teams for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. He serves on and is the past president of the Metro Atlantic Athletic Commission Council of





Presidents. He has served for over a decade on the board of Fidelis Care New York, a health maintenance organization formed by the bishops of the state of New York that serves the poor in New York that was sold in 2018 to Centene Corp. for \$4.6 billion. He was a board member of the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities and the Buffalo Niagara Partnership, president of the St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute Board of Trustees, chair of Housing

Opportunities Made Equal (HOME), trustee of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra and Nardin Academy, member of the NCAA President's Advisory Group, and president of the Buffalo Club. He was a member of the City of Buffalo's Charter Revision Commission in 1999-2000 and later served as a member of the City's Citizens Planning Council.

In October 2018, Hurley and his wife, Maureen, and seven other Catholic lay people in the Diocese of Buffalo formed The Movement to Restore Trust to develop a lay response to the Catholic Church's handling of the clergy abuse crisis in the Diocese. Today, he remains involved in local and national discussions about rebuilding trust and confidence in the Catholic Church to sustain it into the future.

Inducted as a Distinguished Alumnus of Canisius College in 2002, Hurley is also a recipient of the college's LaSalle Medal (1996). St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute inducted him into its Signum Fidei Society (1998) and the University of Notre Dame presented him with its Exemplar Award (1997). He has received HOME's James Crawford Award (1990) and the Director's Award (1997) for outstanding service to the cause of

fair housing. In 2012, Christ the King Seminary conferred an honorary degree upon Hurley. In 2019, the St. Thomas More Guild in Buffalo presented him with its St. Thomas More Award in recognition of his work on the Catholic Church clergy abuse scandal.

