

SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY IMPACT REPORT 2023



Dear friends of Sacred Heart University,

As we reflect upon the past year at Sacred Heart University, I am humbled by the incredible milestones our community achieved in 2022-2023. It is through generous gifts at all levels that we have been able to build the outstanding University that Sacred Heart has become.

Our 60th anniversary celebrations set the stage for a year filled with numerous accomplishments. Fall 2022 was the first year enrollment exceeded 10,000 full- and part-time graduate and undergraduate students. This fall we can boast the largest freshman class in Sacred Heart history. We opened the Martire Family Arena to sell-out crowds and launched *Now We Lead*, the largest comprehensive fundraising campaign the university has undertaken.

Amid all these accomplishments, one thing remains constant—your unwavering support and generosity. Without the investment of dedicated alumni, parents, corporations and friends, our growth and success would not be possible. Your generosity has ignited transformation and innovation across our campus.

In this report, we share a glimpse of the remarkable successes that the SHU community has achieved together. We hope you take pride in the role you play in these ongoing achievements.

As we embark on the next 60 years, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for your dedication to our shared mission and the Pioneer Journey.

Thank you.

John J. Petillo, Ph.D.
President
Sacred Heart University



**Sacred Heart
UNIVERSITY**



BECOMING A TEACHER IS MY LIFELONG DREAM

Thomas Bellucci comes from a family of educators. And now, thanks to the generous support of the *Isabelle Farrington Endowed Scholarship*, he will soon join their ranks.

The Pawling, NY, native is in his junior year of a dual degree program—he'll graduate with a bachelor's, plus a master's in teaching focused on elementary and special education. Ideally, he'd like to make history or math come alive for students in fifth and sixth grade.

"I always remember loving that content, and I think I could teach it to students in a way that they would love it, too," said Thomas, who first honed his career goals working with children with developmental challenges at his local library. "At the end, one of the kids with autism who didn't really communicate gave me a hug. I was 16 or 17, and I realized I had really made an impact. I could foster that kind of enthusiasm."

An interdisciplinary studies major, Bellucci said his parents—a teacher and a guidance-counselor—have worked hard raising their four children and welcoming his grandmother, who has medical needs, to live in their family home. His two older brothers pursued careers in public schools, and his younger sister is studying business economics.

This scholarship helps ease the financial concerns and has special meaning for Thomas.

"Earning my bachelor's and master's degrees here at Sacred Heart University means more than words can truly describe for me and my family," he said. **"Receiving this scholarship will allow me to concentrate on my courses**



without stressing out over finances and to start my dream career inspiring the next generation."

In addition to his studies, Thomas is highly involved at SHU, playing both club baseball and intramural flag football and serving as vice president of the Education Club. He's proud to be part of a "community of learners" working in tandem to shape the next generation.

"This scholarship has been pivotal in my life," Thomas said. "It will allow me to pursue all that I set out to do in coming to this university."

ADVANCING FASHION THROUGH AUGMENTED & VIRTUAL REALITY

Fashion houses from Madison Avenue to Milan are using augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) to create Zoom meetings for international buyers and virtual personal shopping experiences for fashionistas around the globe. SHU Fashion Marketing & Merchandising (FMM) students understand the trend, having immersed themselves in cutting-edge AR and VR tools in their fashion innovation course with Assistant Professor David Loranger, an award-winning researcher who, like his colleagues, worked for industry giants such as Saks Fifth Avenue and Barneys New York. SHU also subscribes to WGSN, the world's largest digital trend and marketing forecasting service, giving students exclusive cutting-edge fashion trends and insights. FMM students, many of whom earn double majors at the Welch College of Business & Technology, use the service and up-to-date training in AI to develop the kind of digital strategies global

brands employ for buying, planning and merchandise allocation. SHU faculty often turn to their industry contacts for guest speakers and panel discussions and hope to incorporate more AI and analytics into FMM. "Once they get a taste of the technology and get comfortable with it, it's a great teaching tool," Loranger noted.



FACULTY PIONEERING RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

Elizabeth Schoen Simmons, assistant professor of communication disorders, received a highly competitive grant from the **National Institutes of Health (NIH)** to research language-delayed toddlers, commonly referred to as late talkers. She and her team, including undergraduate and graduate students, are evaluating how very young children process spoken words to identify early behavioral and biological clues about why some toddlers fail to acquire a spoken vocabulary in the typical time frame.

Chelsea King, assistant professor of Catholic Studies, won a **Richard and Barbara Naclerio Faculty Scholar award** for her project, "Reclaiming Sacrifice," that will critically examine the theological category of sacrifice within the context of Catholicism. She aims to uncover the damaging consequences that the idea of sacrifice has had on marginalized communities, particularly women.

The Davis & Henley College of Nursing was awarded a grant by the **Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administration**. Over the last three years, the impact of the grant/research resulted in a significant decrease in the number of opioid prescriptions through education and training of doctoral students, practicing nurse practitioners and medical doctors.

IMPACTING FUTURE GENERATIONS

Chiqui Guiribitey '70 was just a teenager when her parents entrusted her to Operation Peter Pan, an initiative to spirit more than 14,000 children, organized by the Catholic Charities and the US government, away from an uncertain and possible dangerous future in 1960 Cuba to the promise of life in America.

"People thought that Castro would only be in power for a year or so," she said.

It was 14 years before Chiqui would see her mother. Sadly, her father died before he could be reunited with his daughter.

In the meantime, she was taken in by a loving and caring American family, the Thompsons in Darien, CT. There Chiqui acquired two brothers, Doug and Tod, and two sisters, Ingrid and Kristin. Her uncle, Julio Guardiola, lived in New York City but thought it would be best for her to live with the Thompsons, whom she refers to as her "American family."

She attended SHU, in part because of a special scholarship for Cuban children, an early example of the University's dedication to the region's immigrant families.

She knew of the school through her high school friend, Eileen Conley, who happened to be the daughter of SHU's first president, Mr. William H. Conley.

Mr. Conley's wife even asked Chiqui if she'd like to move into the Conley's Fairfield home to save her the commuting to class from Darien.

"I'll never forget Mrs. Conley offering her house to me," she said. "Again, faculty and deans were all very caring."

"I am doing it because I am very grateful to SHU. They helped me, and I wish to do the same for a student at our great institution."

Chiqui graduated with a degree in education and, true to her lifelong passion, decided to be an ESL teacher at Bridgeport's Central High School for 36 years. She taught hundreds of teenagers from Italy, Cuba, Portugal, Vietnam, China, Colombia and points around the globe, who affectionately called her "Miss Chiqui."

After her retirement, Chiqui and her husband, Jim, moved to Vero Beach, FL, to be close to the Thompsons, who had a home nearby.

She decided making a significant gift was the perfect way to honor the enduring memories and lasting impact Sacred Heart had on her life and, in turn, all those she's taught over the years. "I am doing it because I am very grateful to SHU," she said. "They helped me, and I wish to do the same for a student at our great institution."

CONTINUING DR. MATTEI'S LEGACY

To say Jennifer Mattei, Ph.D., left her mark at SHU is an understatement. Her unwavering commitment to teaching, scholarship and service is a vital legacy for our students, alumni and community partners.

"Jennifer was known throughout the University community for her passion about the environment and engaged anyone who would listen," said Mark Beekey, dean of the College of Arts & Sciences and a longtime friend and colleague of the biology professor who passed away in December 2022.

During Mattei's 27 years at SHU, she loved engaging students, faculty, community partners and the public in the critical work of restoring and conserving coastal species and habitats. A driving force in shaping SHU's biology department, Mattei instilled it with values that embody the University's mission. She was a dedicated teacher who played a key role in developing the coastal & marine science major, and she chaired the biology department from 2003 to 2009. "Jennifer's legacy will continue to have a significant impact on the biology department well into the future," said Provost Robin L. Cautin.

Mattei founded Project Limulus, a large-scale, citizen science effort to tag and monitor horseshoe crab populations in Long Island Sound, and she recruited many students to participate in her research. Collectively, her students delivered more than 75 presentations at internal, national and regional research conferences and received at least five awards. Many of her students went on to pursue careers in science and education.

"Jennifer was a champion of women in STEM, inspiring many young women to follow in her footsteps," said Mattei's husband, Ivan. "She taught by example how to be assertive and how to advocate for yourself and others."



Sacred Heart has posthumously awarded Mattei the status of professor emerita and, together with her family, established the Jennifer H. Mattei Endowed Scholarship for Undergraduate Research. Recipients

receive support to conduct research, ideally involving the Connecticut coastline. They are mentored by and work in conjunction with biology faculty.

Mattei's three children, who have all pursued advanced degrees in STEM, often accompanied her to research sites during the field season, getting to know her undergraduate researchers while tracking tagged crabs around Long Island Sound.

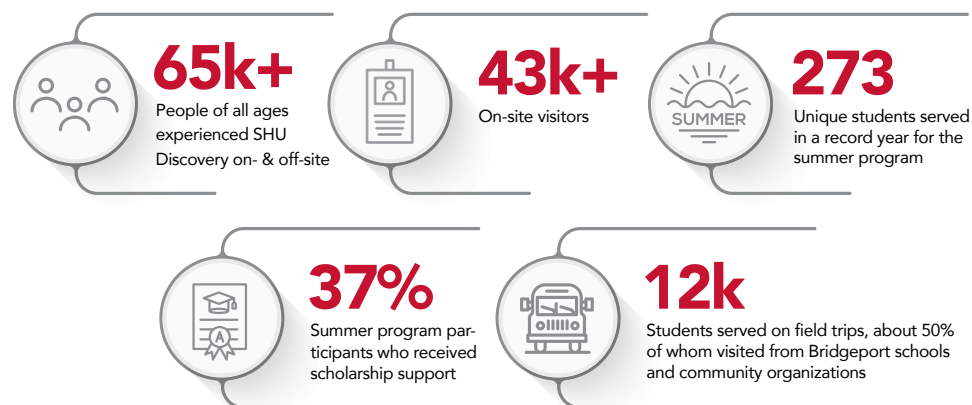
"Jennifer's life mission was to educate students about the importance of our natural world and instill a sense of urgency regarding the need to preserve and protect that world for generations to come," Ivan Mattei said. "Seeing this legacy carried on by other faculty and students proves that she was successful in her goals and that her work is recognized for how valuable it truly is. It means the world to her family to see the work we heard her passionately talk about at home every day continued by others in her stead."

"A scholarship designed to promote undergraduate research in projects along the Connecticut coast supervised by Jennifer's colleagues was the perfect vehicle to honor her memory," Ivan Mattei said. **"We hope that this scholarship will help preserve her spirit at SHU and ensure future students can learn about the significance of Jennifer's accomplishments."**

STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNITY THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

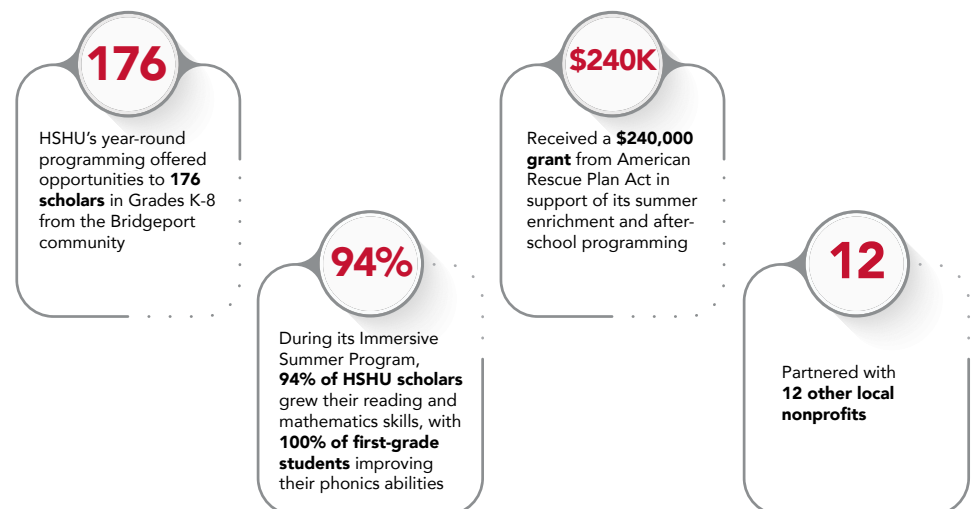
Sacred Heart University's Discovery Science Center & Planetarium

SHU Discovery is drawing on the University's academic and research expertise, relationships with area schools and our commitment to the community to provide a state-of-the-art facility that sparks imagination and learning.



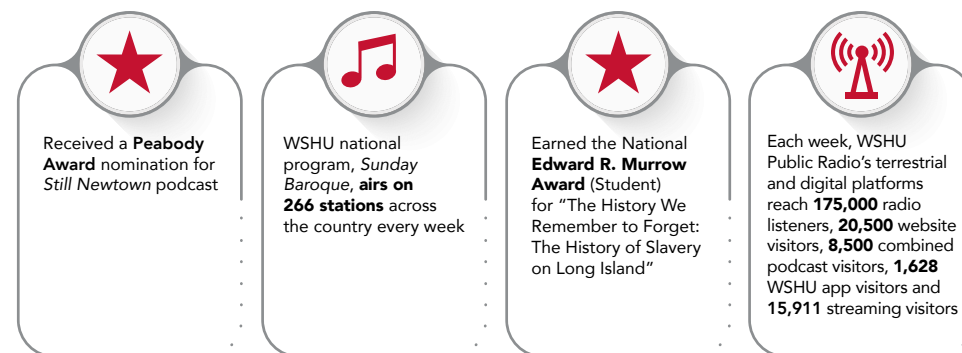
Horizons at Sacred Heart University (HSHU)

HSHU creates a ripple effect throughout the community. Investing in the education and development of children uplifts families and allows the Pioneer Spirit to come alive in a powerful partnership.



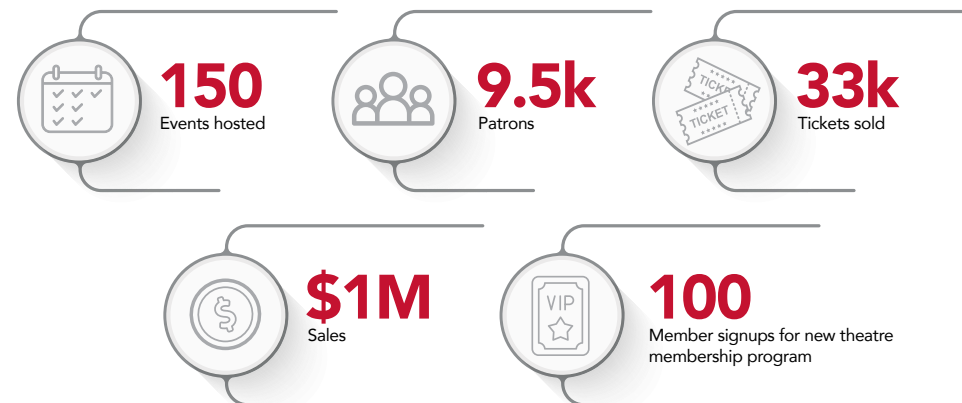
WSHU Public Radio

Owned by Sacred Heart University, WSHU Public Radio is a nonprofit, listener-supported group of public radio stations in Connecticut and Long Island whose mission is to be the leading, clarifying voice of our region—on-air, online and in the community. As a National Public Radio (NPR)-affiliated licensee, WSHU works hand in hand with SHU to serve our community.



Sacred Heart University (SHU) Community Theatre

A 100-year-old cultural landmark, the SHU Community Theatre provides uplifting content that brings people and perspectives together through the Pioneer Spirit. From Grammy Award-winning artists to first-run blockbusters, the theatre has become a go-to venue for "entertainment and education in concert."



BIG RECORDS. BIG WINS.

THE 2022-23 ATHLETICS SEASON WAS A TRANSFORMATIONAL ONE FOR THE RECORD BOOKS!

The Pioneers captured the **Brenda Weare Commissioner's Cup** for overall excellence as well as the **Joan Martin Commissioner's Cup** for women's programs. **Fourteen teams** either placed in the top four in regular season or placed in the top four of the conference tournaments.

The **Martire Family Arena** opened in January of 2023 and is home to SHU's men's and women's DI hockey programs, club hockey and figure skating teams reflecting the institution's significant growth and national status.

On the court, women's basketball won the NEC's first NCAA Tournament game led by NEC Player of the Year, Defensive Player of the Year, Rookie of the Year and Tournament MVP Ny'Ceara Pryor. Pioneer success continued as the cheerleading team captured its fourth consecutive national championship, earning the squad a trip to the State Capitol. The bowling team kept the wins coming with its sixth NEC Championship.

BY THE NUMBERS

1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

4

NORTHEAST CONFERENCE TITLES

86

ALL-CONFERENCE SELECTIONS

12

ALL-AMERICANS

8

ALL-REGION PICKS

7

PLAYERS OF THE YEAR

6

COACHES OF THE YEAR

3

NEC ROOKIES OF THE YEAR

ACADEMIC SUCCESS

80% OF STUDENT-ATHLETES TALLIED A 3.0 GPA OR BETTER

97% OF TEAMS TALLIED AN AVERAGE GPA OF 3.0 OR BETTER

50 MAAC ALL-ACADEMIC TEAM MEMBERS

11 AHCA SCHOLAR-ATHLETE HONORS

6 NEC SCHOLAR-ATHLETES

YOUR IMPACT

7,434 DONORS
made an investment in SHU

Nearly
\$12 MILLION
raised in restricted and unrestricted philanthropic contributions

\$90 MILLION
raised to date
Now We Lead –
SHU's largest comprehensive fundraising campaign
Goal: \$150 million

SHU's annual Giving Day raised more than **\$825,000** from **1,789 donors** and saw a **10% increase** in the number of gifts received

\$4 MILLION
Raised in support of all 33 NCAA Division I athletic teams and facilities upgrades