



Belmont Abbey College President Bill Thierfelder Announces Retirement After 21 Years of Service

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Belmont, N.C. (February 19, 2025) – After over two decades of dedicated service, Dr. William (Bill) Thierfelder, the 20th president of Belmont Abbey College, has announced plans to retire effective August 2, 2025 – the 21st anniversary of his college leadership.

Since assuming the role in 2004, Dr. Thierfelder has led Belmont Abbey College through remarkable growth and transformation. Under his stewardship, the college has expanded academic programs, opened five new residence halls, enhanced campus facilities, launched and carried out an unprecedented \$150 million capital campaign, reinvigorated the college's Catholic identity, and strengthened community partnerships.

"Serving as president of Belmont Abbey College has been the joy of a lifetime," said Dr. Thierfelder. "Together with an incredible team of administrators, faculty, and staff, we have achieved tremendous milestones. I am deeply grateful to our students, alumni, and supporters for their commitment to our shared mission. I have overwhelming gratitude to God for giving me this charge and the grace of the confidence to know that I am leaving the college a more secure, more stable, and more faithful place dedicated to His mission."

Dr. Thierfelder was driven by his faith to join the mission of Belmont Abbey College; inspired by an ad in a newspaper, he applied and, once hired, made it his life's mission to strengthen the college for the glory of God. Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Chuck Cornelio, reflected on the impact of his presidency. "Belmont Abbey College would not be the wonderful place it is if not for Bill Thierfelder. Bill's leadership over the last two decades has been instrumental, and we congratulate and honor his faith-filled stewardship of our vibrant Catholic community," said Cornelio. "On behalf of the board, I want to thank Dr. Thierfelder for his unwavering commitment to the Abbey; we are pleased Bill will continue to be involved in many ways as the College progresses into the next era."

Abbot Placid Solari, O.S.B. of Belmont Abbey Monastery, issued the following statement:

"On behalf of all the monks of Belmont Abbey, I wish to express our profound gratitude to Dr. and Mrs. Thierfelder for their twenty-one years of generous and dedicated service to Belmont Abbey College. Responding to what they perceived as a call, they arrived at a critical time in the College's history in 2004.

Our monastic community can offer only gratitude and respect in response to Dr. Thierfelder's decision that the time has come for him to step away from the office of President. We are happy that, after a very well-deserved sabbatical, we can look forward to welcoming Bill and Mary back to continued service as active members of our college community. We give thanks to God for their leadership and devoted service to Belmont Abbey and Belmont Abbey College."

Key achievements during Dr. Thierfelder's tenure include:

Academics:

- Achieved an academic level change to award master's degrees with eight new programs launched
- Launched the Honors Institute, which has now grown to the nationally recognized Honors College

About Belmont Abbey College: Founded in 1876, Belmont Abbey College is a private, Catholic baccalaureate and liberal arts institution that educates students in the liberal arts and sciences so that in all things, God may be glorified. The college welcomes a diverse body of students and provides them with an education that will enable them to lead lives of integrity, to succeed professionally, to become responsible citizens, and to be a blessing to themselves and to others. The college is conveniently located just 10 miles west of Charlotte, N.C., and is currently home to more than 1500 students. For more information, visit <https://belmontabbeycollege.edu/>.

- Launched the nation's premier Motorsports Business Management Program
- Oversaw our faculty's recognition as the #1 teaching faculty in the South by *US News & World Report*

Enrollment:

- Increased undergraduate enrollment from less than 500 to more than 1,600
- Grew on-campus residency by over 65%
- Achieved most recently an all-time high in retention of 72%

Facilities:

- 40 new or refurbished facilities, including:
 - Sacred Heart Extension
 - St. Joseph Adoration Chapel
 - Jerry & Martha Schmitt Dining Hall
 - Five new residence halls
 - Lowry Alumni House
 - Belmont House in Washington D.C.
 - Eight refurbished sports fields and playing venues

Philanthropy:

- More than \$185 million raised since 2004
- Surpassed Made True Capital Campaign's original \$100 million goal
- Increased the total number of annual donors to the college fivefold

Athletics:

- Instituted the Sport & Virtue approach in all athletic programs, inspiring coaches and athletes to pursue athletics as a method to achieve personal virtue
- During President Thierfelder's tenure, more than 65 teams won the Messik Award, the Conference Carolina's recognition of best overall sportsmanship.
- Grew athletics program to the 7th largest in the country, including adding 15 programs for a total of 44 teams.

Community:

- Spearheaded a relationship with CaroMont Health to build a medical campus adjacent to the campus
- Launched effort with a North Carolina State grant to build a performing arts center for the college and the Gaston County community
- Helped to launch the Benedictine Leadership Institute and Benedictine Leadership Award
- Participated in more than one thousand speaking engagements and media appearances extolling the virtues in sport and academics and the role of faith in the public square
- Served on the NCAA Presidents Council for five years.
- Published two bestselling books: *Less Than a Minute to Go* and *MVP Hands*

Dr. Thierfelder plans to return to campus in Fall 2026 to join the faculty. The Board of Trustees will soon initiate a national search for President Thierfelder's successor. The college will announce more details on the transition process in the coming months.

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