

University celebrates 125th anniversary

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SUBMITTED PHOTO: PETER PORTANOVA FOR THE AQUINAS

STUDENTS POSE in the shape of a '125' on the Dionne Green at the first anniversary event of the year Aug. 29. A University committee has planned a yearlong celebration that will remember The University's history and consider possibilities for the future.

The first bishop of the Diocese of Scranton, the Most Rev. William O'Hara, laid and blessed a single granite cornerstone on Aug. 12, 1888. That cornerstone would later become The University. The historic day was cause of city-wide celebration, and now, 125 years later, The University has the same opportunity to reflect on its achievements and its promise for the future.

Gerald Zaboski, vice president for external affairs, said the year-long celebration will honor The University's successful history.

"Reaching 125 years is very hard for an organization to achieve, and we've done it with tremendous success," Zaboski said. "Our success says so much about our sacrifice, our service and our willingness to take risks. It's these things that characterize The University's leadership, the faculty, the staff, the students and the alumni."

Zaboski said the committee of volunteers that formed last spring to plan the upcoming celebration kept one important thing in mind: the best is yet to come.

"When the committee formed, we were very clear that we wanted to make the celebration active. We wanted to make it about looking forward as much as it is about looking back," Zaboski said. "While it is all about our history, it's also a statement to the future that shows how much more we have to give."

Bishop O'Hara founded The University in 1888 as St. Thomas College. The college was staffed by diocesan priests and seminarians until 1896 and was staffed for one year by the Xaverian Brothers. From 1897 until 1942, the college was administered by the Christian Brothers, and it was renamed The University of Scranton in 1938. In 1942, the Jesuits took control of The University.

The campus anniversary celebration began Sept. 5 with the Mass of the Holy Spirit, which was followed by a luncheon on the Dionne Green.

More than 1,000 students, faculty and staff packed the Byron Recreation Complex for the service, which was led by the Most Rev. Joseph Bambera, Bishop of the Diocese of Scranton.

Events to celebrate the 125th anniversary will continue throughout the year, and will include a variety of lectures, concerts and other events.

The celebration will expand beyond the planning committee to other groups and organizations on campus. One recent expansion includes a photo of students forming the number 125 on the green.

Zaboski said the Weinberg Memorial Library will also serve as a hotspot for celebration.

"The library has been a tremendous partner in our planning. They have so many things in their special collection that has helped to preserve The University's history. They've really been a natural partner for us," Zaboski said. "I'm really excited to showcase the good work that goes on every day by the archivists and our special collections librarians that preserve our history."

A subcommittee is also working on a hardcover book on the history of The University, Zaboski said.

"It will be finished in November or December, ideally right around Christmas time so that it can be purchased as a present," Zaboski said. "It will be a

combination of well-written narrative and a lot of photographs. We're going to tell the history through pictures."

Zaboski said the committee is also working on a way to connect volunteer activity to the anniversary events, but the plans are still under construction.

"Service is central to The University, so we should soon have an announcement about a service project in association with the 125th anniversary," Zaboski said.

Zaboski credits his committee for its tireless effort to make the 125th celebration something special.



"It has been a labor, but it has been with a great committee of volunteers and I want to thank them. A lot of planning has gone into this and it wouldn't be what it is today without the dedicated committee," Zaboski said.

For more information on the 125th anniversary and the events to come, visit 125th.scranton.edu.

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