

IHMs IN ACTION



As president of the [College of St. Catherine](#), the nation's largest college for women, Sister Andrea Lee, IHM, is equal parts strategist, fundraiser and head cheerleader.

"I love the opportunity to talk about the college and to interact directly with students, faculty, alumnae and donors," Sister Andrea says. "It's the heart of my job and what I enjoy most."

The College of St. Catherine – St. Kate's – has two campuses in Minnesota's Twin Cities, with 5,246 students in the undergraduate, associate and graduate programs. The undergraduate program, with 2,916 students, is women-only, as it has been since the college's founding in 1905. The associate and graduate programs are co-ed.

"In 1937, it became the first Catholic college in the nation to be recognized for academic excellence with a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa," Sister Andrea notes.

Sister Andrea was recruited from Marygrove College in Detroit, where she served as interim president and executive vice president and chief operating officer. She has been at St. Kate's since 1998.

Under her leadership, the college's board of trustees adopted the vision for the College of St. Catherine to be the world's pre-eminent Catholic college educating women to lead and influence.

Sister Andrea has worked hard to fulfill that vision and to ensure that a quality education is available to women who want it. She travels frequently to talk about St. Kate's and, with her guidance, the college has enjoyed record enrollment and fundraising and expanded opportunities for students.

"Almost 34 percent of our undergraduates are the first generation in their families to attend college," Sister Andrea reports. "Each year, we provide about \$16 million in financial aid, both need-based and merit scholarships."

St. Kate's students give back through community service projects and innovative programs to foster their social awareness, such as the inter-disciplinary Centers of Excellence.

Organized around four themes – economic justice and public policy; spirituality; health; and science and technology – the centers were created in 2000, two years into Sister Andrea's tenure. They provide collaborative opportunities for students, faculty and community members to work on real problems affecting real women.

Students also participate in global learning opportunities, traveling to India to study the social justice aspects of women and work; to South Africa to study apartheid; and to Bolivia, where an ongoing partnership is helping to improve public health.

"Studies have shown that women's colleges help women develop their leadership skills," Sister Andrea says. "Single-gender colleges provide the opportunity for students to see strong women in leadership roles."

"At St. Kate's, the message to students from their first day here is 'you can succeed.' We challenge them and mentor them to help them grow into effective, ethical leaders."