

Maria College interim president focusing on expanding four-year programs

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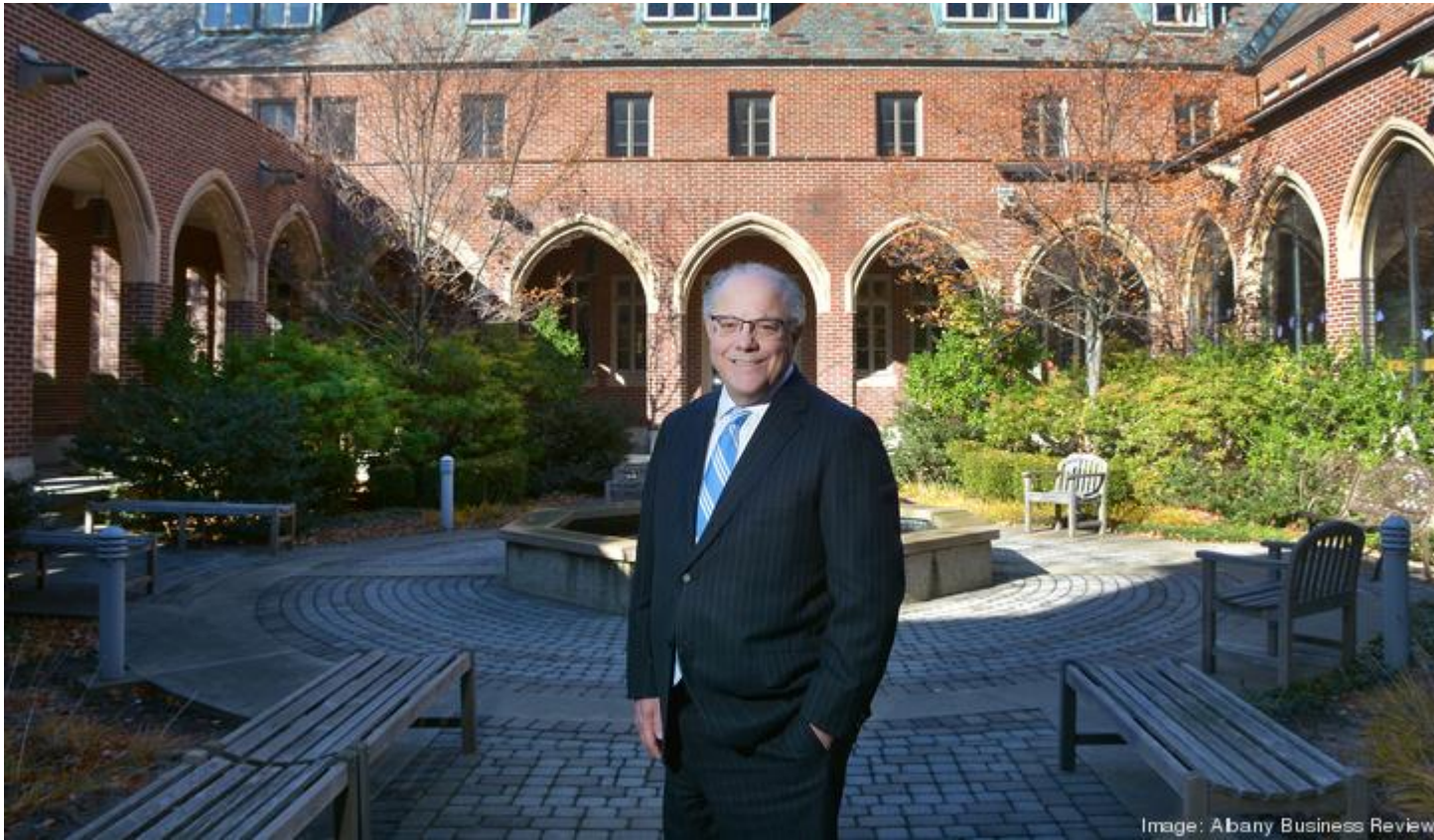


Image: Albany Business Review

Thomas Gamble was named interim president of Maria College in March.

Photo: Donna Abbott-Vlahos

STORY

Thomas Gamble, interim president of Maria College, is continuing to transition the 950-student college from a two-year college to a four-year college.

His goals include keeping Maria College affordable and accessible to students, focusing on health-related professions and to build on the history and mission of the college.

Gamble was previously the president of Mercyhurst University in Erie, Pennsylvania before being named interim president of Maria College. Both Mercyhurst and Maria College belong to the Conference for Mercy Higher Education.

“We like the position we’re in, and we like the place we are,” Gamble told the Albany Business Review. “It seems to really meet the needs of students in the region. We want to be the best version of that we can be rather than becoming something else.”

Maria College has emphasized adding more four-year programs. It announced a healthcare management program in 2015, and also has four-year programs in psychology, health and occupational sciences and liberal arts. The college also has a bachelor of science in nursing degree completion program.

“Our four-year programs, right now, are the fastest growing programs that we have,” Gamble said. “We’re doing very well with our baccalaureate programs because the return on investment is good for associate degree programs, but it’s better for bachelor degree programs.”

He added Maria’s bachelor degree graduates lower student debt than other colleges because of its affordability and accessibility.

Earlier this year, Dr. Robert Cella Jr. was put in charge of the healthcare management program. Cella, who recently retired as the St. Peter’s Health Partners chief medical officer, previously said he wanted to prepare students to enter the health sector and to fill the region’s industry needs.

Gamble said most of Maria’s programs are centered on the health industry because of its high job demand in the Albany area. He said Maria spoke with various hospitals and health organizations about how the industry is changing and what kind of workers will be needed in the future.

He said the nursing program and the occupational therapy assistant program have increasing demands.

Gamble also said Maria is adding courses that deal with quality assurance, continuous improvement and case management – all of which relate to various healthcare professions.

“All of those will better prepare Maria graduates for the changing healthcare industry,” he said.