



For immediate release: Wednesday, July 29, 2020
CCHA WELCOMES THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

St. Paul, Minn. – July 29, 2020 – The Central Collegiate Hockey Association Board of Directors has voted unanimously to welcome the University of St. Thomas as the league's eighth program beginning with the 2021-22 season.

“On behalf of the Central Collegiate Hockey Association, I am pleased to welcome the University of St. Thomas as a new member of our conference,” said Dr. Faith Hensrud, CCHA Board of Directors Chair and Bemidji State University President. “The University of St. Thomas has an outstanding tradition and a proven commitment to the future. As we set our sights on the CCHA’s first season in 2021-22, we are excited to be adding one of NCAA Division I’s newest members and proud to be part of the growth of college hockey.”

Located in St. Paul, Minn., and founded in 1885, the University of St. Thomas will join current Big Ten member the University of Minnesota as the second Division I athletic department in the state of Minnesota. In addition to its membership in the CCHA, 19 of the school's remaining 21 sports will join the Summit League, while the school's women’s hockey program will join the Western Collegiate Hockey Association’s (WCHA) women’s league, and the football program will join the Pioneer League.

“The entire membership of the CCHA is excited to welcome the University of St. Thomas as a member for the 2021-2022 inaugural season,” said CCHA Commissioner Don Lucia. “St. Thomas has an outstanding academic and athletic tradition with experienced and proven leadership as they transition to Division I. St. Thomas fits nicely within the CCHA footprint and impressed us all with the level of commitment they have for their hockey program. The CCHA welcomes St. Thomas, the Twin Cities media, and hockey fans to our league.”

The University of St. Thomas was a founding member of the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) in 1920 and will compete in the league through the 2020-21 academic year. With 6,173 undergraduate students, St. Thomas will be the first private school to compete in the CCHA since the University of Notre Dame in 2013.

“The addition of St. Thomas is significant for the CCHA and all of college hockey,” said Forrest Karr, CCHA Management Council Chair and Northern Michigan University Director of Athletics. “Student-athlete well-being continues to be our primary focus as we work together to move the conference forward. During the application process, St. Thomas leadership demonstrated a clear vision for their athletic department and dedication to ensuring that student-athletes have a quality experience in every way. St. Thomas brings a unique combination of positive attributes that round out our conference and will make all of our programs better.”

As Minnesota’s largest private higher education institution, St. Thomas is a comprehensive urban university steeped in Catholic intellectual tradition. It emphasizes values-centered, career-oriented

education in order to prepare students for the contemporary world. Named an Ashoka U Changemaker campus in 2017, it is one of 45 colleges and universities globally to be recognized as a leader in social innovation and changemaking in higher education.

“St. Thomas not only has an opportunity to extend our visibility across the region, but also to be a part of the CCHA’s re-emergence in college hockey,” said St. Thomas President Dr. Julie Sullivan. “Under Don Lucia’s leadership, this conference has a bright future and we are thrilled to be a part of it.”

The sixth-oldest men’s hockey program in Division III, the Tommies bring rich history to the CCHA. St. Thomas holds a 1,167-671-105 (.627) all-time record, the most wins of any program in Division III. Following the 2019-20 season, the Tommies have now compiled 38 consecutive winning seasons. Of those 38 winning seasons, 33 have resulted in a top-two finish in the MIAC standings. More recently, the Tommies have captured six regular season conference championships in the last nine years.

“We’re thrilled to receive an invitation from the CCHA, as it’s poised to create one of the most competitive hockey conferences nationally,” said Dr. Phil Esten, St. Thomas Vice President & Director of Athletics. “This gives us an opportunity to create strong regional intra-conference rivalries, face off against some of the most storied programs in college hockey, and develop a program that can skate with anyone in the country. Since the first conversation I had with Don Lucia, I believed this a great fit and am grateful we’ll be included in the inaugural year of the new CCHA.”

University of St. Thomas Quick Facts

Founded: 1885

Location: St. Paul, Minn.

President: Dr. Julie Sullivan

Vice President/Director of Athletics: Dr. Phil Esten

Undergrad Enrollment: 6,173

Nickname: Tommies

Colors: Purple and Grey

Hockey Arena: St. Thomas Ice Arena (Capacity: 1,000)

First Year of NCAA Hockey: 1920-21

All-time Record: 1,164-671-105 (.627)

Conference Championships: 34

NCAA Division III Playoff Appearances: 17

NCAA Division III Runner-Up Finishes: 2

About the University of St. Thomas Department of Athletics

The University of St. Thomas supports 22 varsity teams (11 men's and 11 women's) and more than 700 student-athletes. With 16 team national championships, 68 individual/relay national titles, and 110 CoSIDA Academic All-Americans, St. Thomas has established itself as one of the premier comprehensive NCAA Division III athletic departments in the country.

About the Central Collegiate Hockey Association

The eight CCHA member institutions include the Bemidji State University (Beavers), Bowling Green State University (Falcons), Ferris State University (Bulldogs), Lake Superior State University (Lakers), Michigan Technological University (Huskies), Minnesota State University, Mankato (Mavericks), Northern Michigan University (Wildcats), and the University of St. Thomas (Tommies).

The CCHA and St. Thomas will host a joint press conference via Zoom call at 4 p.m. ET/3 p.m. CT. Media members wishing to participate in the call should contact Katherine Harvath at kharvath@nmu.edu for a link to the conference call. Fans are encouraged to follow the event live on [Youtube](#).

A recording of the press conference will be made available on [Youtube](#) following the event.