



## Thomas Dever '84



Thomas Dever '84, a native of Sharon, Pa., graduated from Gannon University with a bachelor of science degree in chemistry, and went on to receive a Ph.D. in biochemistry from Case Western Reserve University in 1990. Tom is currently a senior investigator and head of the section on protein biosynthesis at the National Institute of Health in Bethesda, Md.

### **Tell us about your Gannon experience?**

My greatest recollections of my time at Gannon revolve around the friends I made. After coming to Gannon as a pre-med major, I took the required introductory chemistry and biology courses, and then chose to major in chemistry. My time at Gannon was a mix of dedicated studying in Nash Library and enjoyment with friends watching or playing basketball in the Audi (Hammermill Center) or hanging out in the dorm or, later, in our rental houses.

### **What was your favorite class or who was your favorite instructor?**

I have many fond reflections of classes and instructors, including Professors Bucholtz and Pelczar in the chemistry department. I'll always remember Dr. Pelczar's use of the phrase 'road tar' to describe organic chemistry reactions gone awry. I also recall Fr. McCullough, who taught calculus; Fr. O'Toole, who taught biochemistry and discussed the 1984 Winter Olympics with us before class; and finally, Fr. Krause and his class on medical ethics.

### **How has Gannon University prepared you for life after college?**

Coming out of a small school like Gannon, I was concerned that I would be at a disadvantage when I started graduate school in Cleveland. However, the study habits I developed at Gannon prepared me well for grad school. Moreover, the chemistry courses at Gannon provided me with a solid foundation for the study of biochemistry.

### **Tell us about the type of work that you are doing.**

Currently, I lead a laboratory of nine people, including six post-doctoral fellows, a staff scientist and two technicians in the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development in Bethesda, Md. Our studies are focused on the mechanism and regulation of cellular protein synthesis. We use

genetic, molecular biology, and biochemical studies to investigate how cells make proteins, which are used to form both the infrastructure of our cells and to catalyze the chemical reactions required for life. In addition to our studies of basic science, we study how protein synthesis is regulated in response to stress conditions like viral infection and metabolic diseases.

### **What are some of your hobbies or things you like to do in your spare time?**

Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with my wife, Ronda, a professor at Georgetown University, and our two girls Nora (11) and Rose (8). In addition, I run and play basketball with the fathers of some of my daughters' classmates.

### **Have you stayed in touch with any of your Gannon classmates?**

I have stayed in close contact with Eric Klann '84, a classmate, housemate, and close friend at Gannon. Also, through Eric I have been able to keep up with several of our other friends. Excitingly, Eric, who is now a professor of neural sciences at New York University, and I have had the opportunity to collaborate and coauthor a review article on the regulation of protein synthesis in learning and memory.

### **What advice do you have for current and future Gannon students?**

Take advantage of opportunities both in your major classes and in the liberal studies courses, and set aside time to have fun. As I have advanced in my career, I have been both surprised and excited by how many of my colleagues in the sciences have similar liberal arts backgrounds. The breadth and depth of the liberal arts courses at Gannon help develop curiosity and rigorous thinking required to be a successful scientist. Current students should know that with dedication, they will have many opportunities for success.