



One University. One World. Yours.

ENGAGING THE VISION:

ACADEMIC PLAN, 2008 – 2011

VISION

Saint Mary's, building on its strong tradition of accessibility and community engagement, will be the *University of Choice* for aspiring citizens of the world.

MISSION

The mission of Saint Mary's University is to offer undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education programmes; to engage in research and disseminate its results; and to serve the community from the local to the international level.

CORE VALUES

Saint Mary's University addresses its vision and mission in the context of all of its values:

- In achieving its mission, the Saint Mary's community is guided by core values of academic integrity, the pursuit of knowledge, responsiveness to community needs, openness to change, concerns for a just and civil society, and fiscal responsibility.
- The University is committed to accessibility, diversity and the provision of a positive and supportive learning environment through the effective integration of teaching and research.
- Through promoting the importance of critical enquiry, leadership, teamwork and global awareness, we aim to prepare students for responsible and rewarding lives and to remain engaged with our alumni worldwide.
- We recognize the importance of the contribution and growth of each individual in the University's success.
- Saint Mary's welcomes mutually beneficial partnerships and strategic alliances with all levels of government, with other educational institutions, non-government institutions and the private sector.

Engaging the Vision

.... Aspiring citizens

The ultimate objective of a Saint Mary's education is to nurture and support productive, critical and responsible citizens. Each academic discipline contributes to the development of specialized knowledge and skills. Such knowledge lays the foundation for successful and rewarding lives in a demanding and complex society. The true value of a University education is realized when it also instills in students a strong sense of personal worth and a commitment to social responsibility.

Citizenship begins with a sense of belonging. The community of learners that comprises Saint Mary's must engender this sense and enable it to serve as a springboard for broader engagement.

By fostering the spirit of critical inquiry and cultivating effective powers of communication, education empowers us to embrace the rights and duties of citizenship. By promoting and supporting openness and tolerance, it also affirms that citizenship is inclusive. All members of our society must have access to the full benefits of citizenship, not least of all access to education.

The entire Saint Mary's community has a role to play in realizing the vision. Faculty and staff must exercise leadership by modeling engaged citizenship. The University itself must set a standard of good institutional citizenship. As "aspiring citizens," students must come to recognize that they have the capacity and the responsibility to make a difference.

... Of the world

In today's global society, citizenship is no longer limited to the local or national community. The rights and obligations of citizenship transcend boundaries and relate ultimately to our membership in the human race.

Fully developed citizenship, therefore, requires a cosmopolitan outlook. Saint Mary's well-established commitment to cultural diversity encourages and supports the development of such a global perspective. "Aspiring citizens" must also become "citizens of the world."

The international character of our campus and programmes offers opportunities for personal enrichment through contact with diverse cultures and paves the way to achievement and prosperity as students learn to succeed in complex, cross-cultural settings.

True "citizens of the world," however, must also engage the global challenges now facing humanity at home as well as abroad. Global citizenship is a call to action on issues of universal significance, such as the degradation of the environment, world health, and the growing divide between the world's rich and poor. Global awareness entails linking global to local understanding of such issues. For our vision to be fully realized, it must be focused on the creation of a just and humane society.

Priorities Refreshed and Refocused

Consultations across the campus during 2006-07 indicated that the priority areas of endeavour identified in the 2002-2007 Academic Plan continue to enjoy strong support within the Saint Mary's community. This new Academic Plan, therefore, does not attempt to replace those priorities, but to refresh and refocus them in light of the progress that has been made over the last five years. Momentum must be sustained in areas where major advances have occurred, though the pace of growth need not be so rapid. Increased attention must be paid to improvements in areas where progress has been slow. We must also articulate our Vision more fully and develop further strategies for realizing it.

The Changing Environment

Changes in the environment must also be taken into account and strategies formulated that anticipate developments on the near horizon. The future will unfold differently from the recent past. This new environment is in some respects highly unpredictable, and uncertainty itself is a key feature of the context in which we must work. For example, the level and nature of future government support for the post-secondary sector remains unclear.

Other aspects of the future are more predictable, such as the changing demographics of Atlantic Canada from which the vast majority of our students are drawn. The number of high school graduates in this region will decline sharply over the next five years, and competition among universities to recruit these graduates will continue to intensify. At the same time, a growing proportion of both the general population and of our faculty will reach retirement age. Demand among non-traditional students for educational opportunities may rise significantly, while we will be challenged to find a sufficient number of new faculty members to replace those who retire.

Saint Mary's enjoys an advantage in that we have already experienced a large measure of faculty renewal. Nearly 40% of our full-time faculty have been appointed in the last seven years. While this does not obviate the demographic challenges that we will face in the future, 89 new faculty members have joined us in that period, bringing fresh ideas and energy while discovering synergies with senior, experienced colleagues. The effective incorporation of new appointees into the faculty ranks has required time and effort, a major and promising investment in the future of Saint Mary's.

Changes are also occurring among the new and rising generation of students. Like their predecessors, they see higher education as a major investment in their future and trust that the credentials they earn will lead to successful and rewarding careers. Today's students, however, also show signs of a growing social awareness. The Saint Mary's educational experience must respond to their desire to engage the urgent issues that confront our local and global communities.

Ensuring the Conditions for Success

For the Academic Plan to succeed, key conditions for success must be in place. These conditions encompass people, programmes, policies, facilities and communication strategies. The following steps to ensuring the conditions for success are mutually reinforcing. They are not listed in an order of priority.

- Recruitment and retention of faculty and students
- Staff engagement
- Departmental planning
- Scholarly resources and facilities
- Inclusiveness
- Communication

Priorities

As with the above ‘conditions for success’, the following priorities are mutually reinforcing and are not presented in order of importance.

- Building on a tradition of community involvement, foster a culture of civic engagement and ensure that social responsibility is recognized as a hallmark of Saint Mary’s University.
- Increase student success by enhancing programs and services that support that goal.
- Building on existing areas of strength, broaden and enrich Saint Mary’s programme offerings relating to current and emerging societal priorities, and the needs and interests of new constituencies of students.
- Through a process of continuous improvement, maintain quality teaching and learning as a hallmark of Saint Mary’s University.
- Build on the international character of Saint Mary’s as a distinctive strength of the University.
- Capitalize on the momentum in research, scholarship and graduate studies at Saint Mary’s to further develop our University as a dynamic research institution, and to gain full recognition as such.

Assessing Progress

The shaping and realization of the Academic Plan is an iterative and dynamic process that requires on-going assessment of our progress, examination of our environment, and reflection on our priorities and objectives.

Major indicators of the successful realization of this Academic Plan will be:

- Saint Mary's promotes among members of the university community a spirit of civic engagement and global awareness.
- Saint Mary's is widely recognized for its commitment to social responsibility.
- Saint Mary's students and graduates express satisfaction with their learning experience.
- A higher percentage of Saint Mary's students successfully complete their programmes.
- Innovations take place in curriculum, including new programming and new methods of delivery.
- Accessibility is increased, including accessibility to non-traditional students.
- Saint Mary's continues to develop effective community partnerships, and is seen by the community as open and responsive to its needs.
- The percentage of international students at Saint Mary's remains at its current level or higher, and diversity among the international student body is increased.
- Research activity and research funding continue to grow, not only in absolute terms but also relative to other comparable universities.
- The number of graduate students and the number and variety of graduate programmes grow in a measured fashion.
- Public perception of Saint Mary's reflects more accurately the full range of its achievements and activities.

To assist in this process, annual status reports will be circulated to the campus community and opportunities will be provided for comments and dialogue. These opportunities will include, but will not be limited to, an annual town hall meeting devoted to discussion of the Academic Plan.