

This issue

As our world slowly comes to grips with the new realities and challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, St. Mary's University has continued to be uplifted by the spirit of resilience and compassion from every facet of our community.

This Spring edition of the Marian Update focuses on that spirit and highlights some of the ways we have united as a community to support each other and navigate through these uncertain times.

From the establishment of the Student Emergency Bursary Fund, to the continued commitment to the Good Food Box program, St. Mary's has continued to showcase that compassion and community are two of the pillars on which our institution is anchored.

None of this would be possible without the support and generosity that donors have shown our institution. As St. Mary's continues to provide the highest quality education during these unique circumstances, it is our community and donors who help ensure that programs are in place to help those who need it and allow our students to focus on their academic pursuits.



The St. Mary's University Student Emergency Bursary Fund will go towards helping ease the financial hardships brought upon by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Supporting our Students when they need it most

St. Mary's University's launches the Student Emergency Bursary Fund

During these difficult times, the spirit, dedication, and commitment of the St. Mary's community continues to shine bright - carrying forward the promise that we will all get through this challenging time together.

Right now, our students need the community's help more than ever. They are trying their best to cope with uncertainty, job loss, fear, and economic hardship.

No student should have to choose between making ends meet or continuing to pursue their educational dreams. As such, we have made it our mission to provide some financial relief to our students who need it most.

In April we announced the establishment of the St. Mary's University Student

Emergency Bursary Fund, to help our students who have incurred unexpected expenses or financial hardships related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are inspired by the generosity from our community members in support of this initiative, opening their hearts to our students in a time of need! The reality is that there are many more students at St. Mary's who need our help, calling us to raise even more to ensure students can get the help they so desperately need.

If you would like to make a contribution the St. Mary's University Student Emergency Bursary please contact **Heather Hadden** at heather.hadden@stmu.ca or visit www.stmu.ca/giving

President's Message

As we continue to navigate this unique time and prepare for what life may look like on the other side of this crisis, I take heart in the spirit of the St. Mary's community that has rallied around each other to help carry the weight during this difficult time.

From the amazing resilience demonstrated by our students, faculty, and staff in adapting to remote learning, teaching and working capabilities, to the outpouring of support to the recently established Student Emergency Bursary Fund, it is this spirit of community and togetherness that gives me the utmost confidence that we will come through these challenging times stronger than ever before.



I hope the stories contained in this Spring edition of the Marian Update provide some light during this time, as I believe they highlight that now, more than ever, it is important that we look out for each other and continue to focus on the good that can come out of these extraordinary circumstances.

Thank you for your continued support of St. Mary's University. Your dedication to our institution is truly inspirational.

Blessings and Gratitude,

Gerry Turcotte, PhD
President

St. Mary's Expands Award Winning B.Ed Program

St. Mary's University has expanded its award-winning Bachelor of Education program after receiving Ministerial approval to offer a Bachelor of Education (Secondary) degree to students looking to become teachers. The two-year Bachelor of Education (Secondary) degree program is designed to prepare teachers at the secondary level (grades seven through 12) in Alberta schools.

While graduates will be prepared to teach in grade seven through 12 programs in any school, public or private, faith-based or secular, the program is particularly focused on preparing teachers to teach in Catholic schools in Alberta and beyond.

"This is extremely exciting for us, as we know that there is a need, now more than ever, for qualified teachers in the Catholic school system," said Dr. Sarah Twomey, Dean of Education at St. Mary's University. "With this new offering we will be able to build upon the award-winning foundation of our Bachelor of Education (Elementary) program and offer the same type of quality education for which the St. Mary's Bachelor of Education program has become known."

The Bachelor of Education (Secondary) program will be offered as a two-year after degree program as well as part of a single-entry stream that would see students complete a four-year Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree, followed by a two-year Bachelor of Education after-degree.



At the Heart of St. Mary's

The Valentine Family's Legacy of Generosity

It is through the generosity, commitment and passion of members of the community that St. Mary's University has become the institution that it is today, and few families has played a larger role in the continued growth of St. Mary's than the Valentine Family.

A member of the St. Mary's 'founding family', Ted Valentine attended the first Steering Committee in 1986, which aimed to establish a Catholic College in Calgary, Alberta. Ted went on to become an official member of the first St. Mary's University Board of Governors in 1987, a position he held until 1996.

The Valentines have been instrumental in establishing St. Mary's as a leader in post-secondary education, thus allowing students to pursue their academic dreams. From developing the scholarship and bursaries program, to participating in committees and sponsorships for various initiatives, there isn't a single facet of St. Mary's that hasn't been greatly impacted by the generosity of the Valentine family.

Born and raised in Allerston, Alberta, Shirley, the matriarch of the Valentine Family, was one of six daughters on the family farm. Shirley quickly realized that education would be her way off the farm, leaving her home in Allerston to attend high school in Calgary. Upon her graduation from high school, she earned a softball scholarship to Saint Louis University, a Catholic post-secondary institution located in St. Louis, Missouri.

Shirley's connection to humble beginnings in rural Alberta is at the root of the Valentine family's St. Isidore Bursary, an award established to benefit students from rural areas that demonstrate a financial need. This is but one example of the Valentine family's commitment to increasing St. Mary's accessibility to students while also fostering academic and spiritual development.

The Valentine Family, through Valentine Volvo, have been longtime supporters of St. Mary's fundraising initiatives through event sponsorship and support. It is through this kind of commitment of funds and resources that St. Mary's is able to continue providing students with an excellent post-secondary education.

"My dad was on the board for quite a while and I wanted to keep the involvement going. I think that St. Mary's University has been a big part of the Valentine legacy in Calgary, and I am making sure that legacy will never be forgotten."

— Paul Valentine



This commitment does not end with Ted and Shirley, as the dedication to Catholic education and St. Mary's has been passed down to their children as well. Ted and Shirley's son Paul joined the St. Mary's University Board of Governors in 2013 and is currently serving as Chair of the Finance Committee. Additionally, their daughter Kathryn has committed her time and resources to various St. Mary's initiatives and special events.

"My dad was on the board for quite a while and I wanted to keep the involvement going," explained Paul. "I think that St. Mary's University has been a big part of the Valentine legacy in Calgary, and I am making sure that legacy will never be forgotten."

According to Paul, there are three defining factors that are important to Valentines; faith, education and sports. The Valentine family's commitment has also reached into the realm of athletics, with the donation of the Valentine Family Athletic Courts in 2013.

As for the future, The Valentine family hopes other schools can look to St. Mary's as a beacon of stability, a shining example of what a post-secondary institution can be, and a bastion of Catholic Education in Canada.



SERVICE

in a time of need

The value of access to healthy and nutritional food is often something that is collectively taken for granted, until these necessities are no longer available or accessible.

To help St. Mary's University students have access to nutritious foods, St. Mary's established an initiative to provide these essentials, free of cost, to those who need it most. The Good Food Box program, as it known, was facilitated in partnership with the Calgary Community Kitchen and is a city-wide initiative to provide fresh produce to as many Calgarians as possible — including students at St. Mary's.

"Our student population, like many student communities, has a large number of low-income individuals and rely on these discounted programs for essential needs," said Dr. Lance Dixon, Director of Campus Ministry at St. Mary's University.

"Most of their income goes to rent and to school costs and so food immediately becomes compromised and we know how essential healthy food is for the wellbeing of an individual so we made this a priority of Campus Ministry to support students in this area."

The program, which launched in September, has now expanded to include free food accessible through the 'Five Loaves' Initiative, again in partnership with the Calgary Community Kitchen, but this time as part of a program called 'Spins Around' — which partnered with local grocery stores to provide food that is still edible but would have been cast away by larger grocery chains.

"We saw this as, not only an opportunity to provide free food to our students, but also to participate in an act of social justice because we don't feel it's right that edible food is thrown away. We would rather keep it on tables than see it in landfills."

Dixon has been overwhelmed by the response from students as a result of this initiative.

“Some students have responded to this invitation to participate in a social justice initiative. Not only are they able to get free food but some students are also doing this because they believe food as a commodity should be distributed justly and equitably, and not be thrown out as waste.”

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, cupboards were not available to students and Dixon was still seeing the need, and an increased need, for food during this difficult time.

Under restrictions and limitations, Dixon would go to the warehouse and fill his vehicle and store the food at his home. Due to a lack of refrigeration available, only non-perishable items were able to be collected, but the response has been powerful.

“I let it be known that if anybody wanted to continue to participate in this program that I would be willing to deliver the food directly to their homes,” said Dixon. “I have been delivering to about a dozen [students] each week.”

Before the introduction of financial assistance from the Federal Government, Dixon noticed an increased number of St. Mary’s students looking to help in various ways, and believes that this speaks to the character of the students and larger St. Mary’s community.

“Students were asking me ‘how can I help’, that St. Mary’s community becomes a community that is caring for the wider city,” said Dixon. “We’re trying to be in a position of being a light for our city in this time. Our students want to be meaningful citizens.”

“When we talk about giving to St. Mary’s at this time, we are talking about supporting the work we’re doing in the wider community and that we are a vehicle to do that.”

Dixon has also noted that the need for access to technology is a large issue facing students and the community at large during these difficult times.

“Some people are sitting at home with no access to anything that we generally take for granted,” said Dixon. “These are the places where a little bit of financial support and creative initiatives can really make an impact right now, perhaps in ways that we hadn’t quite envisioned before this pandemic.”

Dixon’s commitment to community and service to those who need it was not going to be quelled by the dangers associated with COVID-19, and credits this to his perspective on life.



“For myself, being immersed in a healthy spiritual community is so vital. In the good times and the bad times, a healthy spiritual community enables us to keep perspective on life. It is in these times, precisely when life becomes difficult that we are called to respond and we do that with confidence with the gifts we’ve been given and that we can share and in the power of the human spirit.”

“The hope, and the love, and the compassion. These are deep currents in the human spirit, and if we take time to believe that they are there, that is what enables us to see these

moments and respond.”

All of these initiatives are done with prudence and a strict adherence to all of the safety regulations in place, and Dixon acknowledges there is a risk, but doesn’t let that keep him from continuing to make a positive impact within the community.

“There’s always a risk to stepping out on the edge of these crises and trying to make a difference, but what is the risk of not doing anything is the question I ask myself,” explained Dixon. “Not participating in the common good is a much greater risk.”

“It’s better that I live for something good in this world than to live knowing that when the time came to make a difference I chose to do nothing.”

*If you would like to help St. Mary’s students during this time, please consider a donation to the **St. Mary’s University Student Emergency Bursary Fund**, established in response to the economic uncertainties facing our students during this time.*

Highest Honour

St. Mary's to present Linda Olsen with Honourary Fellowship

St. Mary's will bestow the University's highest honour on celebrated Calgary media personality Linda Olsen. Linda has been named the 2020 Honourary Fellow, a distinction that will be formally awarded at the 2020 StMU Convocation ceremony.

Since 2012, Linda has served in various volunteer capacities with St. Mary's from emceeing several President's Dinner fundraiser events to other initiatives and has often used her position as a trusted voice in the Calgary community to help shine some light on the amazing initiatives being undertaken by St. Mary's.

"As a trusted member of the local media, Linda has often used her platform to support St. Mary's initiatives and events. She has championed media exposure for St. Mary's, leading to increased publicity and awareness for both the institution, events, and programming such as our Humanities 101 program serving those who have previously experienced barriers to education," said Thérèse Takacs, Vice President Advancement and Campus Services at St. Mary's University. "

"Linda continues to be an engaged member of the community, using her voice to promote and advocate for St. Mary's University whenever possible. These qualities and actions demonstrate why she is so very deserving of this most prestigious honour.

When initially approached by St. Mary's back in 2012 to serve as emcee for the 2012 President's Dinner, Linda admits that she was aware of St. Mary's but not familiar with the amazing things done by the university.

"I was thrilled to be asked to [be emcee], I was so impressed with the event," said Linda. "It was a pleasure to hear more about the exceptional student experience and I have been honoured to host the President's Dinner for several years – the highlight being the 25th Anniversary celebration this year."

From this role, Linda volunteered her time and expertise as a member of a Communications committee at the school to assist St. Mary's in growing its profile.

"Perhaps people weren't as familiar with St. Mary's a few years ago as they are today," explained Linda. "To be able to tell them that there is this other really exceptional learning facility in Calgary was something I was proud to be part of."

Over the years Linda has witnessed the growth of St. Mary's first-hand, and is very excited to see the direction St. Mary's is headed.

"St. Mary's has long been a sought out educational facility. It has established

itself as a leading liberal arts and science university and that's exciting to see in Calgary," said Olsen. "While there has been change and growth there's really that feel of a more intimate educational experience."

As the parent of a recent graduate of St. Mary's University, Linda was so proud to see everything come full circle.

"When I hosted the President's Dinner for all those years, I didn't even think about my own children attending," explained Linda. "When my daughter said she was going to get her Bachelor of Education from St. Mary's I was so happy and excited for her. With what I knew of the school and her personality I knew it was going to be a perfect fit for her and it was."

During her education at St. Mary's, Linda's daughter was also able to travel to Ukraine for part of her practicum, an experience that Linda believes helped her daughter really come into her own.

"It was an amazing opportunity for her, and when she spoke at a St. Mary's event after her experience sharing what she learned I was just so proud of her. I saw this young woman before me, and I thought that this was a great example of the teachers St. Mary's is sending out into the world."



Linda Olsen (right) with daughter Kristina - a graduate of the StMU B.Ed program

The Spirit of St. Mary's

March 2020 will be a month that everyone throughout the world will remember due to the lasting implications from the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been a difficult time as everyone immediately transitioned into a 'new normal' of remote work, and at St. Mary's University, remote learning.

For an institution that prides itself on the closeness of community, the individualized attention paid to each and every student, and the ability to access faculty/staff/administration, St. Mary's had to quickly pivot to ensure that our students would still receive the best possible education given the circumstances.

Thanks to everyone working together, St. Mary's was able to transition to online class delivery for students and remote working capabilities for staff, all while providing honest and transparent communication to our students, staff, faculty and community members. It was a monumental task for a smaller institution like ours, but it is a testament to dedication that every single person at St. Mary's has towards ensuring that our students come first, and that they are still able to receive the high-quality liberal arts and science education that St. Mary's has become known for.

For fifth year St. Mary's University Student and member of the St. Mary's Student Legislative Council Mikayla Pritchard the adjustment period was relatively smooth but Mikayla notes that adjusting to this new form of instruction is different for each student and offers some suggestions on how to adapt to this educational environment.

"What has been a big change for many students is the shift from the small classroom setting into the online virtual world of learning," said Mikayla. "For those who are struggling with this change of schooling, remember to take it one day at a time. Write down a schedule for what you want to accomplish in each day of the week in order to stay on track. Take breaks when you need to. Reach out to your professors for help. Find things that motivate you to accomplish what you need to finish throughout the day."

"St. Mary's University has been extremely resilient throughout this process thanks to the hard work and dedication from the staff and faculty."

— Mikayla Pritchard



Mikayla Pritchard is currently going into her fifth year pursuing a BA in Liberal Studies concentrating in political science and sociology.

Mikayla credits the staff and faculty at St. Mary's for making this transition as smooth as possible given the extraordinary circumstances everyone has now found themselves in.

"St. Mary's University has been extremely resilient throughout this process thanks to the hard work and dedication from the staff and faculty," said Mikayla. "Being able to have the accessibility to learn from home would not have been successful without their commitment and many sleepless nights organizing class material and understanding how the online class sessions work. It is because of their quick response that we, as students, can still be educated during this time."

"So, Thank you very much!"

As our communities continue to navigate these changing landscapes the message at St. Mary's and in our community is that we are all in this together. We are all learning how best to help each other, and our fellow community members to ensure that we stay healthy, stay connected and continue forward – together.

The gift of Catholic Education

Since becoming the Bishop of Calgary and Chancellor of St. Mary's University over three years ago, Bishop William McGrattan has witnessed first-hand the continued evolution of St. Mary's as a Catholic liberal arts institution and has developed a deep appreciation for the work of his predecessors to ensure that this university flourished in the city of Calgary.

"Coming to the Diocese over three years ago, I was very pleased to learn that there was a Catholic University here. There is a sense of gratitude that previous Bishops and many of the committed laity saw that this was an important institution to start."

Bishop McGrattan is impressed with and grateful for the continued commitment by members of the community towards supporting St. Mary's.

"The ongoing support of benefactors has been a big takeaway," said Bishop McGrattan. "Over the three years that I've been on the Board of Governors at St. Mary's, I've become more aware of the rich life of the university and I've met many committed benefactors. That gives me encouragement that they continue to see the value and the importance of Catholic higher education."

The Bishop believes that having a liberal arts education focuses on the development of the student and is ordered to the Truth. This formation frees students for growth in faith, wisdom, and virtue. Through the revitalization of the Church's tradition, a liberal arts education offers students the kind of learning that will avoid the perils of secularism and relativism. This faithfully focused education is an engine of evangelization for the Church and in turn, the culture. It nourishes the souls of the students in truth, goodness, and beauty.

"St. Mary's students will undoubtedly attain gainful employment, but more importantly they will be people who contribute to society in a much broader way by seeking the common good and by witnessing to their Faith."

As Chancellor of St. Mary's University, Bishop McGrattan believes there are two roles that his position can serve. A chancellor is defined as both the executive and ceremonial head of the university. Bishop McGrattan's previous experience as a Rector and the Interim Principal of a Catholic College has prepared him well to make an executive contribution.



Bishop McGrattan leading the procession at the 2018 StMU convocation ceremony.

"I've taken on the role of Chancellor much more from an Executive point of view, working with the Board, the President and the Vice-Presidents. I see that as an important part of what I can bring as Bishop in the role of Chancellor. To be involved in some of the key committees that help guide the university from a certain perspective provides the opportunity for a real contribution to its development."

"I'm also at the University to celebrate mass where I get to meet the students. I've had the privilege of being invited to teach and I've enjoyed that opportunity to get back into the classroom. I want to convey to the students some of the Church's teachings in the area of morality and social justice and to field their questions. This provides me with a sense of the Church in future generations and that is exciting."

For Bishop McGrattan, Catholic Education is extremely important in society – perhaps now more than ever.

"The Catholic tradition in Higher Education tries to bring together both reason and faith. There's a world view that comes from our Catholic tradition which I think can be lost sometimes in our present day – where we are maybe focusing on more secular values and we're not necessarily aware of the transcendent values. The very witness and presence, that we believe in a Creator and a God, informs students as they're taking their courses. It infuses the whole of the university's worldview. It's a way of approaching reality that isn't narrow and reductionist but rather is really expansive and includes transcendent values such as a belief in God."

Upcoming Events

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9th Annual St. Mary's University Golf Tournament

Silvertip Resort
Thursday, August 27
stmu.ca/golf

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The *Marian Update* is published by St. Mary's University and distributed to alumni, friends and supporters to celebrate University accomplishments and share news and information throughout the St. Mary's community.

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