

Expanding Minds, *Inspiring Hearts*

STRATEGIC PLAN 2024 - 2029





LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

St. Mary's University is located in the traditional territories of the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) and the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes the Siksika, the Piikani, the Kainai, the Tsuut'ina and the Iyahe Nakoda. We are situated on land where the Bow River meets the Elbow River; the traditional Blackfoot name of this place is "Mohkinstsis," which we now call the City of Calgary. The City of Calgary is home to the Otipemisiwak Métis government. St. Mary's University is situated in District 6, the Calgary Elbow Métis.



OUR PLACE IN THE WORLD

Greetings and welcome to the new St. Mary's University! Located in the dynamic, growing, and entrepreneurial city of Calgary, we are keenly focused on the future. Even as we honor our past successes, we are leaning in with a more intentional focus on equipping our students to navigate the challenges they will face as global citizens. Springing from the liberal arts and sciences tradition and undergirded by enduring and living Catholic values, our graduates are prepared to bring peace, social justice, and change in communities around the world.

The pace of change in today's world is rapid and will remain so for the foreseeable future. This means we too are putting on our runners to stay ahead of what our students most need. Our new Strategic Plan – *Expanding Minds, Inspiring Hearts*, sets out a bold vision for the future: to be the preeminent Catholic University in Canada. It outlines the four priorities that will guide St. Mary's decision-making and efforts for the next five years. With this plan, we commit to put people first, strive for academic excellence in all we do, celebrate our identity, and honour the Indigenous people who came before us. Lastly, we are building for growth to deliver needed talent to both private and public industries. St. Mary's is a small university in a growing and dynamic city that has the advantage of being nimble and quick to pivot to meet the world's changing needs.

We want to thank all those who have contributed to making St. Mary's what it is today. We also want to celebrate our faculty, staff, students, alumni, donors, partners, friends, Indigenous leaders, and government officials who came together to give life to the *Expanding Minds, Inspiring Hearts* Strategic Plan. What makes St. Mary's new and special? In short, a renewed emphasis on our people and an enhanced celebration of our unique place in this world. As the only independent Catholic University in Western Canada, we take pride in celebrating our faith, and we hope that you will step up and invest in the new St. Mary's. As we focus on transforming the lives of our students — mind, body, and spirit — we invite you to join hands with us in creating the new St. Mary's University.

Grateful to be working along your side as we begin this exciting new chapter in the history of St. Mary's University.



Gary Strother,

Chair and Treasurer, Board of Governors



Sinda K. Vanderpool, Ph.D.

President and Vice-Chancellor, St. Mary's University



Regarding the role of the Catholic post-secondary educational institution in the modern world, Pope St. John Paul II in his 1990 Apostolic Constitution, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, stated:



Being both a University and Catholic, it must be both a community of scholars representing various branches of human knowledge, and an academic institution in which Catholicism is vitally present and operative. A Catholic University or College, therefore, is a place of research, where scholars scrutinize reality with the methods proper to each academic discipline, and so contribute to the treasury of human knowledge.



HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

St. Mary's University occupies a unique place in the Canadian Catholic post-secondary educational system and is the only independent Catholic university in Western Canada. Although there are other Catholic universities across the country, most are associated with larger institutions or universities, and do not operate independently.

As stewards of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, StMU seeks to foster a vibrant, diverse, and engaged learning community that is grounded in a common search for truth through faith and reason and dedicated to the common good, through the promotion of teaching, research, service learning, and the flourishing of the whole person. The StMU community is grounded in the Catholic faith and is open to all, including people of many faiths and cultural backgrounds.

In 1986, St. Mary's was founded by committed lay Catholic men and women in collaboration with the Bishop of the Diocese of Calgary as an institution to serve Catholics and others in southern Alberta. From these humble beginnings, St. Mary's University has risen in the Canadian post-secondary education landscape by delivering strong, student-focused liberal arts and sciences degrees as

well as a Bachelor of Education after-degree. The Bachelor of Education degree, a centre of academic excellence, is known industry-wide as one of the top programs in Western Canada.

In 2022, St. Mary's University officially became a member of Universities Canada, a membership organization that places St. Mary's among top universities across the country. The culmination of years of hard work, expansion, and rising prominence, this historic achievement reinforced the notion that Canada needs a liberal arts, sciences, and education University firmly grounded in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition. As St. Mary's builds on these past successes, the renewed mission, vision, values, and priorities in this strategic plan will serve as a springboard for St. Mary's bright future.

OUR VALUES

As a Catholic University, we are committed to:

1. WELCOMING & SERVING ALL

We are student centered and believe in and value first and foremost our students' authentic needs, enabling them to flourish in their life's vocation. We celebrate and welcome people where they are. We see each person in our community as a unique human being, respecting their inherent rights and honouring their dignity. We value all individuals regardless of their culture, sex, talents, religion, race, perspectives, and social conditions. We are committed to Indigenous Truth and Reconciliation, desiring to weave Reconciliation and Indigenous ways of knowing into the fabric of our community. We aim to serve others in ways that create community, connect people, and promote social justice.

2. ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

We believe in pursuing academic excellence in teaching, learning, research, and creative enquiry. Recognizing academic freedom as fundamental to the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, we value the rich history and complexity of human thinking while engaging the intellectual potential of every student learner. Our students receive a holistic education, that respects reason and faith and which promotes democratic, global citizenship as well as ethical leadership, and — in discovering beauty, goodness, and truth — awakens in each a desire to transform the world.

3. FAITH

We cherish faith, and we uphold a Christian worldview as revealed and interpreted over time through Sacred Scripture and Catholic teaching. We uphold the complementary nature of faith and reason and aim to foster this relationship in all we do. Further, as part of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, we welcome all knowing that you do not have to be Catholic to believe that every human life is sacred; in the dignity of the poor; the common good; social responsibility; and that the earth is a gift to be shared.



OUR MISSION

Open to all and grounded in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, St. Mary's University educates the whole person to inspire and empower tomorrow's engaged, global citizens for the future.

OUR VISION

To be the preeminent Catholic University in Canada, known as a centre of academic excellence providing a vibrant and engaged student experience that prepares authentic leaders committed to the service of others.

A number of steps led up to the development of this new strategic plan leading to its formal submission to the StMU Board of Governors (BOG).

On April 4, 2023, the StMU Board of Governors approved proceeding with a strategic planning process and approved the Terms of Reference for a Strategic Planning Steering Committee.

STMU STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

1

Data Gathering

2

Strategic Plan Framework

3

Feedback

4

BOG Approval

5

Rollout



STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

A plan was approved to gather input from the broad StMU community as outlined below:

▶ **April 6, 2023:** The launch of a dedicated micro-site on the StMU main website, dedicated to informing constituents about the strategic planning process.

▶ **May 1 – 29, 2023:** The launch of a comprehensive survey to collect input from any interested constituents, including faculty, staff, alumni, donors, students, and members of the community.

▶ **May 15 & 16, 2023:** Two focus group sessions were held with external and internal constituents to gather perspectives and strategic planning themes.

▶ **May 17, 2023:** A Town Hall was held for anyone to attend, including faculty, staff, students, parents, and members of the community, to gather perspectives and strategic planning themes.

▶ **June 23, 2023:** A strategic planning workshop was held with the StMU Board of Governors to discuss the emerging themes identified through the data-gathering process, and to discuss the values, mission, vision and priorities of the university moving forward.

▶ **July 6, 2023:** StMU Faculty were invited to a meeting to discuss the themes emerging from the data-gathering process and the Board of Governors strategic planning workshop. Staff were invited to all town halls and select feedback sessions.

▶ **April 27, May 26, June 21, September 7, & October 17, 2023:**

The Strategic Planning Steering Committee met five times to review data collection; provide oversight to the process; and review emerging drafts.

▶ **September 5, 2023:** An initial version of the strategic plan was created.

▶ **September 25 & 26:** Three initial feedback sessions were held with Academic Council, internal staff, and external constituents to review the September 5th version.

▶ **October 10, 2023:** The Board of Governors met to review the emerging draft.

▶ **November 2, 2023:** An external community feedback session was held.

▶ **November 6, 2023:** A student feedback session was held. Participants reviewed a solid draft of the strategic plan and provided additional input.

This Strategic Plan suggests many operational initiatives, some relatively minor in scale, others significant, with all of them relating to at least one strategic priority contained within. As implementation of the plan is dependent on an institutional discussion around financial capacity and prioritization, operational planning will involve the creation of a people first strategy, the creation of an Academic Plan, a Strategic Enrolment Plan, a Master Facilities Plan, and a Revenue Generation Plan.



CLEARLY FOCUSED ON OUR PRIORITIES

People First

Offer a stellar experience for all members of the University community.

- Create a people first strategy
- Cultivate a welcoming, inclusive and safe environment
- Provide a positive employee experience
- Enhance the student experience: mind, body, and spirit



Celebrating our Identity

Ensure that every aspect of the university is clearly and distinctively grounded in our mission and vision.

- Develop shared appreciation for the Catholic Intellectual Tradition and how it shapes our work
- Build awareness of the University
- Enhance campus to become a gathering place for all
- Foster commitment to Truth & Reconciliation
- Build an alumni program



Academic Excellence

Aim for the highest standards of academic and professional excellence.

- Create an academic plan
- Enhance our emphasis on learning engagement
- Develop a greater emphasis on research



Building for Growth

Provide sufficient growth and capital infrastructure to ensure a vibrant, challenging, and uplifting student-centred university experience.

- Develop a master-facilities plan
- Build a plan for student enrolment growth
- Develop a revenue generation plan
- Ensure accountability and transparency

People First.



Offer a stellar experience for all members of the university community.

GOAL 1

Cultivate a welcoming, inclusive, and safe environment for all members of the StMU community.

Objectives:

- ▶ Assess the gaps in the current environment.
- ▶ Create a wellness and mental health initiative at the University.

GOAL 2

Provide a positive employee experience in a dynamic engaging, and rewarding work environment.

Objectives:

- ▶ Conduct a competitive salary and benefit assessment in the local market.
- ▶ Conduct an engagement survey to identify and address needs and gaps.

GOAL 3

Enhance the student experience in ways consistent with our mind, body, and spirit education.

Objectives:

- ▶ Enhance campus culture to foster a strong sense of belonging, thriving, and engagement for every student.



At St. Mary's University, the importance of putting people first is not simply practice. It is at the heart of a journey of growth and understanding. Here, the value of uniqueness isn't just acknowledged; it is the radiant force that illuminates our pursuit of knowledge, making our community richer, more vibrant, and profoundly human.



Kathryn Strilchuck

Team Lead,
Student Success

Building for Growth.

6
CENTRAL
CITY CAFÉ
BOOKSTORE
ROOMS





PRIORITY - BUILDING FOR GROWTH

Provide sufficient growth and capital infrastructure to ensure a vibrant, challenging, and uplifting student-centred university experience.

GOAL 1

Develop and approve a master-facilities plan for the future direction and growth of the university.

Objectives:

- ▶ Construct a multi-purpose building to include a gymnasium, additional classrooms, and student/faculty/administration space.
- ▶ Undertake planning and feasibility for an on-campus residence building for students.
- ▶ Promote the sustainable and ethical use of campus resources.

GOAL 2

Develop a revenue generation plan.

Objectives:

- ▶ Undertake a comprehensive fundraising campaign to include a focus on capital expansion and endowment growth.
- ▶ Explore special funding opportunities from private foundations and government sources for key institutional priorities.
- ▶ Explore partnerships that might diversify and enhance revenue streams.

GOAL 3

Build a plan for student enrolment growth.

Objectives:

- ▶ Create an enrolment plan to increase student Full Load Equivalent (FLE'S) to 1,500.
- ▶ Grow international students to 10% of enrolment (StMU's international enrollments should not be impacted by the Federal Government's recently announced percentage cap).
- ▶ Adequately resource student recruitment activity.
- ▶ Increase continuing education offerings to expand enrolment growth.

GOAL 4

Ensure accountability and transparency through assessment of institutional performance against the strategic plan.

Objectives:

- ▶ Create processes for reviewing performance on the strategic plan.
- ▶ Establish procedures and practices for developing annual priorities.

Academic Excellence.



Aim for the highest standards of academic and professional excellence.

GOAL 1

Create an academic plan that builds upon StMU's strengths and fosters opportunities for strategic growth aligned with future career and educational opportunities for our students and graduates.

Objectives:

- ▶ Complete a review of existing programming with a vision for renewal and new program development for both undergraduate and graduate programs.
- ▶ Build out research infrastructure, especially research administration, developing institutional capacity to support both faculty and the Institution, with special emphasis on new graduate programs.
- ▶ Invest in the Psychology Program as our next centre of academic excellence to enhance human flourishing through research, teaching, and providing services to the community.
- ▶ Develop programming in sustainability and the environment.
- ▶ Examine modes of delivery and expand on-line offerings.
- ▶ Create a plan to build out scholarship and research excellence across the campus.

GOAL 2

Enhance our emphasis on learning engagement across all programs.

Objectives:

- ▶ Ensure that faculty/student ratios remain appropriate and aligned with StMU's mission.
- ▶ Continue to develop quality teaching practices that will help to maximize student learning including building out undergraduate research opportunities.
- ▶ Enhance community service learning across the university.
- ▶ Enhance career and graduate school preparation through Work Integrated Learning, mentoring, and connections with alumni, and industry.
- ▶ Develop research partnerships with local, regional, and national industries, and community organizations that align with existing areas of expertise.

Celebrating our Identity.



PRIORITY - CELEBRATING OUR IDENTITY

Ensure that every aspect of the university is clearly and distinctively grounded in our mission and vision.

GOAL 1

Develop a shared appreciation for the ways the Catholic Intellectual Tradition animates and shapes our work at all levels (e.g., governance, commitment to Catholic values, etc.)

Objectives:

- ▶ Foster iterative discussion, nurture ongoing dialogue, and build bridges that create clarity around how St. Mary's Catholic identity is lived out in the 21st century.
- ▶ Enhance the Catholic identity of St. Mary's by increasing faith-focused community programming, faith formation opportunities, and pastoral care for all members of the St. Mary's community.

GOAL 2

Build awareness for the university in key target markets.

Objectives:

- ▶ Define the key markets and audiences where StMU wishes to impact awareness.
- ▶ Define key messaging themes around the StMU Catholic identity and the value of a liberal arts and science education.

GOAL 3

Enhance our campus to become a gathering place for all where community spirit flourishes, a serious commitment to Truth and Reconciliation is fostered, robust dialogue about pressing societal issues ensues, and faith is celebrated.

Objectives:

- ▶ Create an Indigenous community relationship strategy.
- ▶ Honour and celebrate the Indigenous history of the land that St. Mary's University now calls home. Invite Elders and Knowledge Keepers to share the history of the land.
- ▶ Define what community engagement means to StMU.
- ▶ Enhance support for coordinating community engagement.
- ▶ Identify key national and international partnerships targets for broadening brand awareness and increasing enrolment and impact.

GOAL 4

Build an alumni engagement program.

Objectives:

- ▶ Define "alumni" for StMU.
- ▶ Resource alumni engagement programming appropriately.
- ▶ Define alumni engagement for StMU.



St. Mary's University



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StMarysUC



StMarysU

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