



Engaging the Vision:

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

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

