

**ACADEMIC PLAN  
FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT**

April 2, 2002

## ACADEMIC PLAN



## Culture

In addition to securing resources of various kinds, we must also sustain and promote an institutional culture consistent with our plan. Specifically, we must foster a spirit of innovation, an openness to collaboration, and a culture of respect for students. Strongly committed to accessibility, Saint Mary's must also continue to excel at removing barriers to education among students with special needs and at welcoming students from a variety of social, ethnic, and religious backgrounds.

### **Building on Strengths**

#### Undergraduate Teaching and Learning

Saint Mary's has a long history of achievement in undergraduate education. With a

- Expand accessibility through the further use of educational technology and the selective development of programs using the World Wide Web.
- Foster high standards of student literacy by implementing a campus-wide strategy.
- Recognize that learning takes place inside and outside the classroom. Cultivate opportunities for experiential learning and for a high level of involvement in both the university and the community.
- Develop, promote, and continuously evaluate library resources to ensure that they are closely and effectively tied to the academic programs of the university.

### Community Outreach

Saint Mary's is uniquely committed to service to the local, regional, national and international communities, a commitment which it realizes through outreach activities, community-based research programs, and contributions to life-long learning. Its reputation as an open and responsive educational institution has brought it a large measure of goodwill in the community. Outreach units include the downtown Business Development Centre, which supports entrepreneurial initiatives; the Saint Mary's University Art Gallery, which contributes to the cultural life of the community; the Burke-Gaffney Observatory, which promotes science education in the schools and among the public; and the university's athletic facilities, an invaluable resource for recreational activities and for building community spirit. In a number of ways, Saint Mary's places its research capacity at the disposal of the community, through the work of individual students and faculty as well as through collaborative and group projects. Continuing education programs offer a variety of opportunities for life-long learning. Saint Mary's downtown campus in the World Trade Centre and various off-campus extension centres facilitate access to an array of courses and programs.

In community partnerships at many levels, Saint Mary's is working from a position of strength and is well positioned to build on its experience and reputation at home and abroad. While a strong foundation exists for future success, energy and creativity are required to make the most of our opportunities.

#### Actions:

- Develop new community-based research partnerships, locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally taking full advantage of new federal funding programs that support such partnerships.
- Develop, expand, and/or support a select number of academic institutes and centres as bridges to the community and as means of influencing public policy.

- Increase the availability of Saint Mary's research and academic facilities to the wider community, combining such access (where appropriate) with the generation of additional revenues for the university.
- Advance partnerships with community and professional groups as a way of developing and expanding programs for life-long learners.

### International Programming

Closely associated with Saint Mary's commitment to community service is its distinctively international character, reflected in its proportion of international students (approximately 10%) and its success in securing funding for international projects. Saint Mary's students come from approximately 90 countries. Flourishing programs in English as a Second Language provide a crucial component of both international recruitment and international partnerships. Saint Mary's has a number of active collaboration agreements with universities and educational agencies around the world, and offers study abroad opportunities and international mobility opportunities to students in a variety of its programs. Its undergraduate and graduate programs in International Development Studies are nationally recognized and are important ingredients in its international programming. Other programs in traditional disciplines combined with those in Asian Studies and Global Business also play an important role.

#### Actions:

- Achieve further increases in the number of international students at Saint Mary's, ensuring that such students have the services, supports and opportunities they require.
- Work for the greater internationalization of the Saint Mary's curriculum as a way of engaging global issues and of preparing students to live and work in a global environment.
- Promote and support greater student mobility and more extensive participation of Saint Mary's students in study abroad opportunities, exchange programs and international internships.
- Diversify and achieve greater balance in Saint Mary's international linkages by establishing or strengthening ties in countries or regions where our presence has hitherto been relatively weak.

## **Meeting Challenges and Opportunities**

## Research and Scholarship

Saint Mary's faculty and students have made significant contributions to scholarship over many years. An important dimension of this success has been the extent to which undergraduate students have been included in faculty research projects. Given the historically undergraduate character of the university, however, research has not been assigned as high a priority as it otherwise might have been. Saint Mary's has now reached a point in its history where a greater emphasis on research is possible and opportune. The demands of a knowledge-based economy and the challenges facing a society undergoing fundamental change make the generation of new knowledge and the critical assessment of inherited assumptions matters of urgency. Increased public investment in research, especially by the federal government, offers greater access to the necessary resources. Research funding is increasingly linked to community partnerships, and this trend converges strongly with Saint Mary's traditions of outreach and service. Faculty renewal, crucial to a flourishing research agenda, has been exceptional at Saint Mary's, as nearly half of its current complement was appointed in the last ten years. By the same token, the opportunity to pursue both research and teaching is a central concern of prospective new faculty members. A strong research culture is therefore essential to future recruitment.

### Actions:

- In keeping with the Strategic Research Plan for the university, build clusters of research strength in areas where Saint Mary's has the capacity to excel. The appointment of Canada Research Chairs is a crucial ingredient in this strategy.
- Under the auspices of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, develop strategies for gaining maximum access to external research funding from granting councils, other government sources and private foundations.
- Identify additional sources of funds that can be used in connection with



