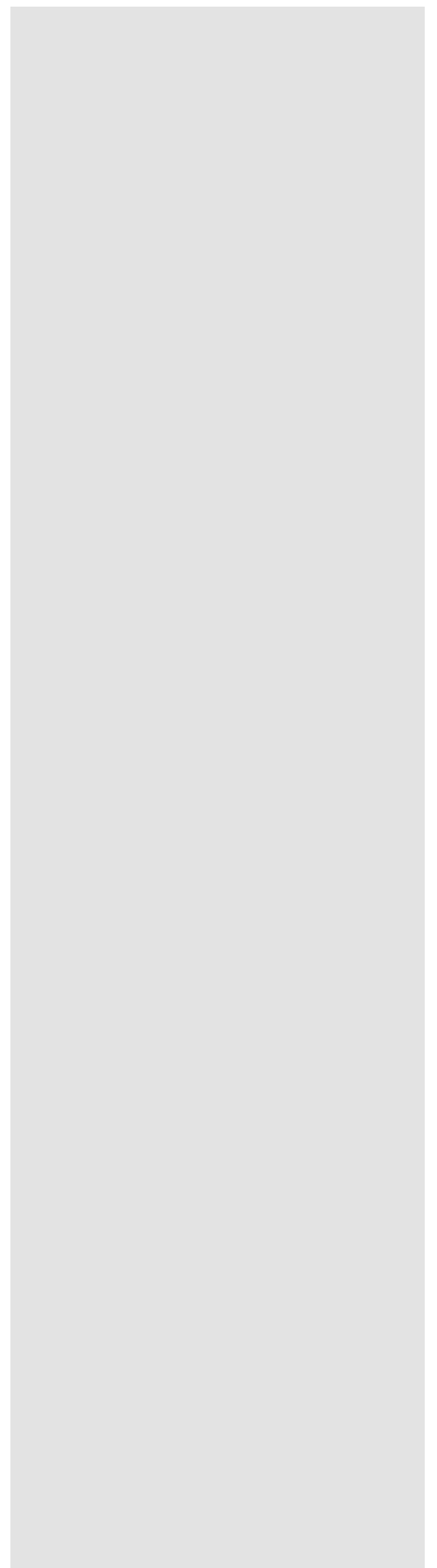


ACADEMIC VISION



DEFINING OUR CHARACTER

Liberal Education

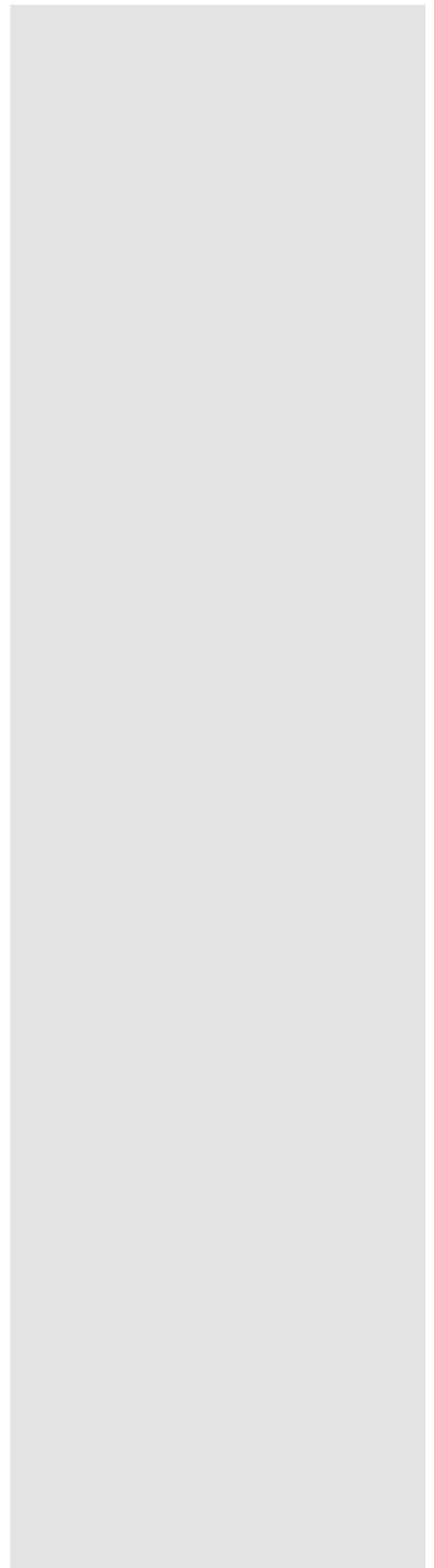
The fundamental strength of Saint Mary's University is its longstanding commitment to liberal education, understanding it to be transdisciplinary and embracing the diversity of ideas and experiences that characterize the social, natural and intellectual world.

The purpose of liberal education is to cultivate in students a broad knowledge base, skills of enquiry across the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences, appreciation for the importance of historical and cultural contexts, and respect for truth and ethical conduct. Within the framework of liberal education, our faculties provide in-depth coverage of fundamental disciplines,

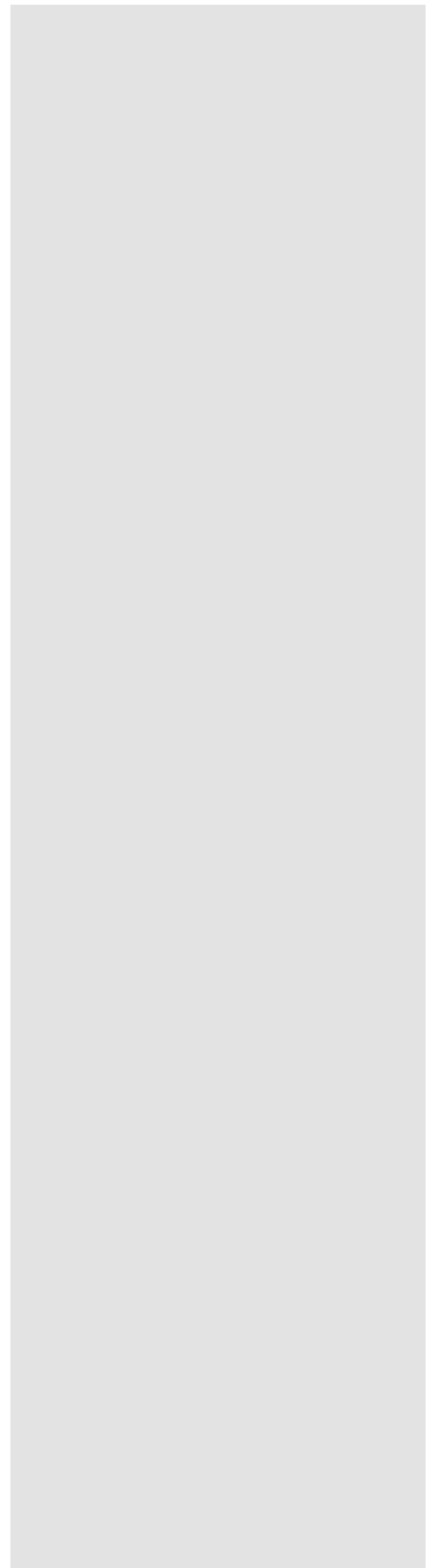
has helped to attract high caliber new faculty and students, and assures that undergraduate students, as well as our graduate students, are learning in a research environment.

Accessibility and Diversity

Saint Mary's University promotes an academic environment wherein all members, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or creed, work and study together in an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation. We are committed to accessibility for the communities we serve, cultivating community involvement and civic engagement. We have a long tradition of responding to the needs of the local community in partnerships and strategic alliances with business and industry, all levels of government, other educational institutions, and non-government agencies. In the spirit of accessibility which we have



We are committed to continuing and enhancing the exploration of innovative opportunities. Given our commitment to accessibility, experiential learning, | interdisciplinarity, and community engagement, we particularly recognize and support scholarship and creative work that addresses community involvement and international



Research, Creativity and Graduate Studies

Saint Mary's University's increased focus on research, creative activity and graduate studies is reflected in numerous ways. Our researchers in all faculties are excelling in the production of original work. Where external research funding is involved, growth is reflected in an increase from about two million dollars at the turn of the century to approximately ten million dollars in 2011.

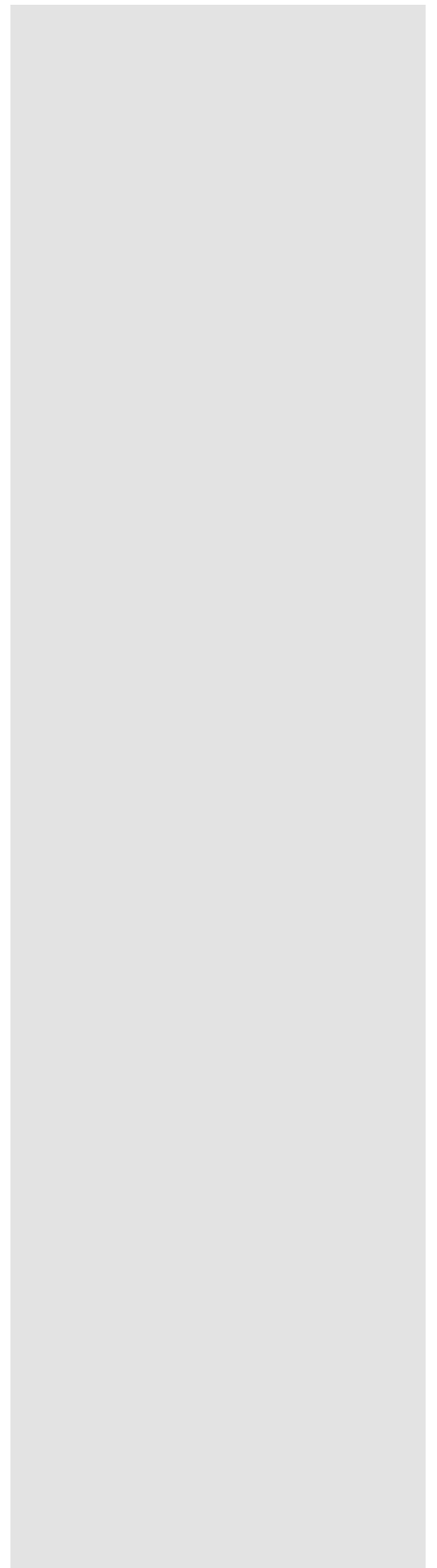
Since the Government of Canada established the Canada Research Chairs (CRC) Program in 2000, Saint Mary's has been successful in acquiring nine chairs. Three of these are associated with CNCOHS, the Canadian National Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, established in 2002, which is now home to the largest collection of occupational health psychologists in a North American university-based centre. Closely related is the new Homburg Centre for Health and Wellness, due to open in 2012. These, together with the Gorsebrook Research Institute's Centre for the Study of Sport and Health and The Centre for Spirituality in the Workplace, constitute a concentration of academic expertise centered on health and wellness, and create excellent opportunities for further development.

Two of the chairs are in Astronomy and Astrophysics, and constitute the core of another centre, the Institute for Computational Astrophysics, founded in 2001. These chairs, together with two existing appointments and a third new faculty position, have created a unique, world-leading resource in a fast-growing area of scientific research, that of using parallel computers and innovative algorithms to model complex astrophysical systems and analyze the vast volumes of data flowing in from today's powerful astronomical instruments.

The Sobey School of Business is home to two chairs in Management and Finance, as well as two research centres, The Centre for Excellence in Accounting and Reporting for Cooperatives, and the Centre for Leadership Excellence. These chairs and centres support and build upon scholarship within the Sobey School of Business.

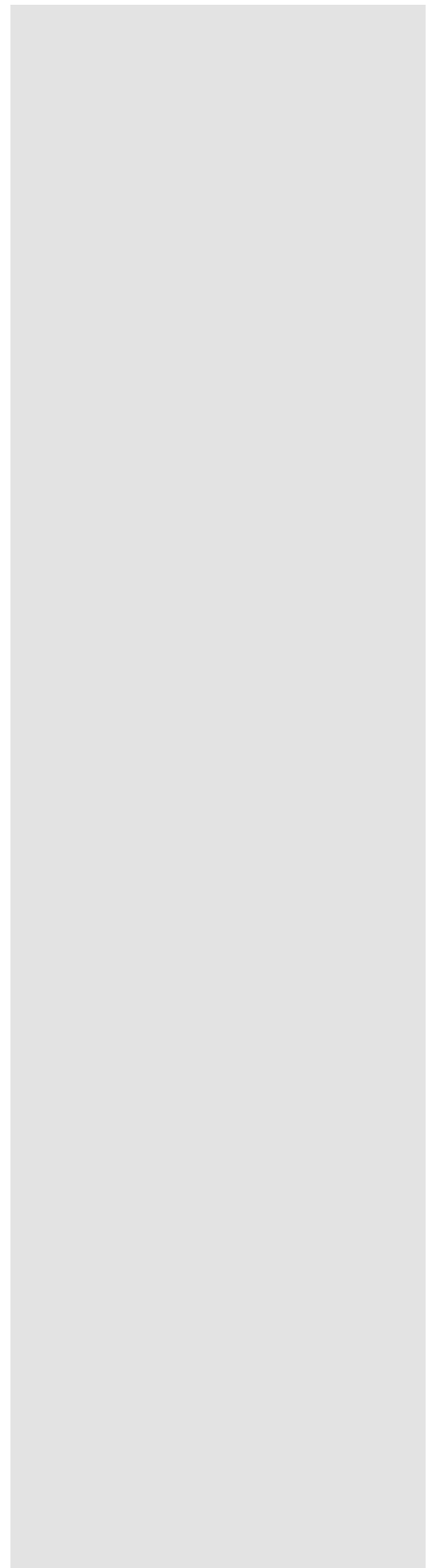
Another chair is in International Development Studies, an area that Saint Mary's

through the Atlantic Centre of Research, Access and Support for Students with Disabilities, Saint [Mary's](#) has played a leadership role in ensuring that higher education is accessible.



physics research that has attracted some of the highest research funding in the university from the federal government funding agencies. This speaks of our newly emerging research strengths and our prestigious place nationally and internationally.

Community Outreach



7% over two fiscal years, and universities face uncertainty in the level of provincial government support looking ahead. Government also recently approved a new multi-year memorandum of understanding between the Government and universities, calling for Nova Scotia universities to develop and implement accountability measures focused broadly on the delivery of quality educational programs.

In the context of those challenges, student tuition at Saint Mary's compares favorably with other Maritime universities. However, given that the majority of the Saint Mary's University operating budget comes from student tuition, decreases in domestic enrolments or in international enrolments from our major markets can have a significant impact on the university's operating budget, with consequent impacts on academic programs. Until recently, student tuitions had not been allowed to increase. Increases are now permitted subject to Government direction on maximum allowable caps. Enrolments

Like many universities, Saint Mary's University is challenged in retention of students, particularly from the first to the second year. Although attention to program and market conditions is important, success in recruiting and retaining students comes from meeting student needs. The needs are met through program design, considering both intended outcomes, and supporting the learning experiences of students during their programs. Saint Mary's University has broadened its academic program offerings over the years, introducing new programs (e.g., Bachelor of Environmental Studies) as well as modifying existing programs (e.g. adding co-op education to the Bachelor of Arts) that serve to broaden the market locally and abroad. Innovation in academic program offerings is helpful in attracting and retaining students, but appropriate and adequate support for innovation, led by our scholars, is needed to ensure continued innovative program growth. As one approach to addressing retention issues, Saint Mary's University implemented the LEAP Program, a program that takes cohorts of incoming students through a common learning process supported by peer mentoring and targeted student support services in their first year of studies.

Universities are continually challenged to develop innovative ways to address improving student success, and Saint Mary's University is also challenged to look carefully at

Despite these challenges, Saint Mary's is well situated to meet them successfully. The defining characteristics of the university and our substantial progress over the years in addressing past challenges provide a strong foundation to meet current and future challenges. We are firmly established as a respected and contributing institution within the fabric of local and national society, and recognized as a university that deeply cares for and is committed to the accessibility, needs and success of its students. Building on these and our other strengths, we face the future with confidence and optimism.

BUILDING ON OUR STRENGTHS

Building on our progress and strengths, and aware of the challenges we face, we have identified six areas of emphasis for [the 2012-2017 academic plan](#).

1. Enhancing Student Learning through Excellence in Teaching.

The commitment of Saint Mary's University to excellence in teaching is reflected in our

- Investigate ways of better supporting both faculty and students to facilitate learning within diverse and multi-cultural classroom environments.
- Support initiatives that enhance faculty-student interaction, foster student engagement, and promote a culture of enquiry.
- Continue to strive for an appropriate balance between teaching and research, and for ways of integrating the two.
- Develop strategies to enhance first year instruction with a view to better engaging and retaining students.
- Investigate and assess approaches to learning outcomes-based curricula.
- Continue to build on innovations in communications technology to enhance learning, in full consultation with all interested parties.

2. Enhancing Student Success

Saint Mary's University recognizes the importance of the contribution and growth of each individual to the success of the university, and this applies particularly to our students. Considerable progress was made, during the tenure of the 2008-2011 Academic Plan, in improving the conditions for student success.

Building on these activities, the focus for student success will be on five major areas of concern: financial aid, retention, transitions (from school to university, from first year to

- Continue to improve our understanding of key dimensions of the student experience and follow up on results with appropriate action.
- Assess and implement best practices for early detection of students requiring preparatory assistance for success in their area of study.

3. Linking Theory and Practice

Since the mid-twentieth century, there has been a growing movement among educational institutions for the integration of theory and practice as an integral part of the processes of higher education. This movement is concerned with better preparing students

academic audiences. In the past five years Saint Mary's University has become recognized by granting agencies, other academics, and regional and national research administrators as highly successful in research activities relative to its peers. It is important to maintain this momentum. We will continue to develop research programs that are relevant to and engage the Atlantic Canada community, and engage in research projects that offer value nationally and internationally by involving Saint Mary's researchers abroad and bringing visiting researchers to Saint Mary's. We also aim to ensure that students, particularly undergraduates, benefit from research activities at the University.

Proposed Actions

- Recognize

