St. Joseph’s College
University of Alberta
Edmonton

Strategic Plan 2016-2021

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Table of Contents

Introduction 3

Context 4

   Academic Courses and Programs 4
   Student Residences 6
   Worshiping Community 7
   Campus Ministry 7

Development of the Strategic Plan 8

Identifying Goals and Actions 10

Goals, Actions and Activities 11

What’s Next? 14
Introduction

St. Joseph’s College completed a review of its Identity and Mission in late 2014. Based on the feedback from students, faculty, staff, and community members, four pillars of the College character clearly emerged. These four pillars: the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, Catholic Social Teaching, a Welcoming Sacramental Community, and the Integral Development of the Person guide the services we offer to the entire campus community.

This past year the College has been involved in the development of a Strategic Plan that will inform the College activities over the next five years. The challenge for the College and the goal of the strategic plan is “to infuse the Identity and Mission into the everyday life of the College” \(^1\) so that the College can continue to contribute to the University of Alberta through its academic endeavours, and promote the development of all those involved in the College community through its activities.

The plan was developed by the Strategic Planning Working Group, led by the President and assisted by the Campus Innovation Consulting Group. The Working Group has representation from faculty, students, and professional and support staff as well as Academic Affairs, Administration, the Board of Governors, Campus Ministry and the Worshipping Community. Members of the Working Group are:

Elyse Borlé, Cameron Ehnes, Kevin Feehan, Sr Pat Halpin, Fr Terry Kersh, (Chair), Matthew Kostelecky, Rebecca LaGrange, Denis Lamoureux, Fr Don McLeod, Sara McKeon, Brian Maraj, Marc Neal, Brittney Nurse, Karen Wichuk.

The College’s internal and external stakeholders have been involved in the process and the work of the Group has been shared with participants through regular communications.

\(^1\) St Joseph’s College Identity and Mission document, 2014, p3
Context

From its inception, St. Joseph’s College has pursued three key foci: offering academic courses in Christian thought, providing residence facilities for men and women, and serving as the centre of Catholic Chaplaincy services to the University community. These foci are advanced through the hard work and dedication of professional and administrative staff, support staff, contract instructors, tenured faculty, and student volunteers. St. Joseph’s College (SJC) is a truly welcoming community in the heart of the University of Alberta north campus.

Academic Courses and Programs

As an affiliated College of the University of Alberta, SJC plays a complementary role in achieving the overall university mission of teaching *Whatsoever things are true*. Our diverse undergraduate course offerings give students access to a distinct and challenging curriculum not generally available on a secular campus. SJC courses are open to all University students and available for enrollment through the University’s course registration application, “Bear Tracks”. The College’s enrolment has been relatively consistent over the past three years. Approximately half of the students attending our classes come from the Faculties of Arts and Education, with a strong representation from the Faculty of Science.

SJC offers its courses year-round and in online, in-person and blended-learning formats in order to meet the needs of today’s students who are increasingly using technology to help them balance multiple life priorities. Our courses reinforce the value of a Liberal Arts education and assist in developing a commitment to social justice and civic engagement at the University of Alberta.

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Notwithstanding these considerations, it is our dedicated instructors who make St. Joseph’s academic contributions so successful. Subject to the same standards of teaching, research, and service as their University counterparts, our eight tenured/tenure-track faculty work alongside a number of experienced contract instructors to provide a diverse curriculum. Student evaluations consistently confirm the outstanding instruction provided at the College. In addition to busy teaching schedules, our instructors also engage the wider community by giving public lectures on topics of current interest and contemporary thought.

Besides small class size and approachable and knowledgeable instructors, the majority of students in the College’s most recent internal survey\(^3\) said they took SJC courses because of a particular interest in the topic offered. Some courses directly relate to students’ focus of study, for example, nursing or business ethics courses, while others connect with the imagination and passion of students, as with a theological exploration of Tolkien’s Middle Earth. Topics offered encapsulate a broad range of subjects from philosophy, environmental ethics, sport and religion, women and spirituality to social justice and science and religion. Instructors also challenge their students using the transformative potential of experiential education: several classes provide service-learning opportunities, locally and internationally. The College’s ability to attract students reflects in part the purposeful efforts of the Academic Dean and instructors to design courses in response to students’ needs and interests.

College courses are included in U of A certificates and in the Arts minor in Christian theology. Education students can choose to earn our Certificate in Catholic Education. They learn to navigate questions of faith and ask pressing questions of their own, simultaneously gaining additional teaching skills and a relevant credential for their resumé. In 2015, St. Joseph’s College partnered with the Faculty of Education to develop a cohort of Catholic educators within the Faculty’s Master of Education in Educational Studies program.

\(^3\) SJC Student Questionnaire 2012-3
The College has an extensive library to support these academic programs. Besides providing study space and computer access, the library is essential to the work of academic staff and students. Under the leadership of a professional librarian, the library, which houses approximately 25,000 volumes, is fully integrated with the University of Alberta library system, including the larger NEOS Library Consortium.

**Student Residences**

Since first opening in October 1927, St. Joseph’s College has welcomed young men to make their home here. They occupy 63 single rooms and all have the opportunity to grow intellectually, socially and spiritually together. Affectionately known as ‘Rangers’, these men have won 28 campus recreation cups in a row⁴. Seeking the same opportunities for friendship and growth for women, from 2006 onward SJC contracted with the University of Alberta to host a small residence for female students in HUB. The women who lived there over the subsequent nine years paved the way for the new St. Joseph’s College Women’s Residence, which opened in Fall 2015. The residence, a separate building directly south of SJC, can house 284 women in single, double and four-bedroom furnished suites. The purpose-built spaces, the efforts of a conscientious group of student leaders, and extensive programming are contributing to the development of a strong community as the new building becomes a home to its residents.

Careful financial management combined with the encouragement of the initial female residents in HUB has enabled the building of the new residence. While the scale of the project has resulted in an anticipated deficit for approximately the first five years of operation, in the long term the residence will contribute to the financial stability of SJC, just as it already contributes to the richness and diversity of the College community.

While both residences have students in all years of study and from many different countries, the majority of our residents come from rural Alberta. Programming and services aim to help everyone grow in a holistic way by creating safe and welcoming living environments for men

⁴ Campus Recreation Services, 2016
and women of all faith backgrounds. Located at the heart of the campus and with dedicated professional and student staff, St. Joseph’s College residences are well placed to help fulfill the University of Alberta’s goal of ensuring the availability of quality student housing on campus. 

**Worshipping Community**

Besides its classrooms, student study lounge and cafeteria, St. Joseph’s College is home to St. Kateri Chapel in the Women’s Residence Building and St. Joseph’s College Chapel in the original building. Mass is celebrated 6 days a week. Both spaces welcome everyone. Students, professors, staff, and members of the local community who are otherwise unconnected with the University, all cross paths in a space created for quiet, prayer and worship. From supporting student activities to sponsoring Syrian refugees, this small community is a powerful witness to living out faith and has inspired many students by its collective example of charity in action. Apart from liturgical celebrations, the chapels remain open to the public as places of respite and reflection in the midst of a bustling University campus.

**Campus Ministry**

Just as our spaces are open to all, so too is the SJC Campus Ministry Team—a combination of professional staff, chaplains and committed volunteers. The SJC Identity and Mission Statement clearly states that “every person who participates in the life of the College is welcomed and respected, simply and solely because she or he is a human being created in the image and likeness of God”⁶. Propelled by a firm conviction of the dignity of the human person, Campus Ministry welcomes all and supports their integral development. This includes, but is not limited to, their relationship with God, their mental health, continued academic achievement, and the pursuit of healthy lifestyles.

Such a varied community requires and inspires varied ministries. Campus Ministry offers retreat opportunities, connects volunteers with local organizations like the Marian Centre,

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⁵ [http://blog.ualberta.ca/2015/11/together-let-us-build-better-community.html](http://blog.ualberta.ca/2015/11/together-let-us-build-better-community.html)

⁶ Identity and Mission Statement, 2014, p.11
Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and Catholic Social Services, and provides many leadership opportunities for students to run interest groups for their peers. The Campus Ministry Team supports ecumenical work, and this year is collaborating with St. George’s Anglican parish in running a monthly Taizé prayer group. The Team is a participating member of the Interfaith Chaplains’ Association at the University of Alberta (IFCA) that sponsors the annual Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols at the Edmonton Winspear Centre.

In the past four years, Campus Ministry has seen an increase in the demand for services, particularly pastoral counseling and crisis management\textsuperscript{7}. For example, the Team established an Alcoholics Anonymous group for students on campus, and has worked with SJC Residence Services to create a student mentorship program for all our first year residents as a direct response to the growing awareness of student mental health issues on campus. While individuals are referred to University Healthcare Services whenever appropriate, many simply seek a compassionate listener. Through safe, non-judgemental pastoral counseling and its many other supportive activities, Campus Ministry concretely enacts the College’s mission as a welcoming sacramental community for all.

SJC challenges all its participants to seek truth, to be “peacemakers and doers of justice”\textsuperscript{8}, to affirm the dignity of the human person and to grow as whole persons. These values emerge naturally from conversations in our classrooms, the residence common rooms, the student study lounges, our chapels, our library, and, we hope and pray, in our hearts.

\textsuperscript{7} Campus Ministry Director, 2016
\textsuperscript{8} Identity and Mission Statement, 2014, p. 6
Development of the Strategic Plan

In addition to accepting the call to respond to others’ needs, the College community also accepts the responsibility of envisioning for the College as a whole the goals it should seek to achieve within the next five years. Based on information from extensive interviews and sessions with College staff, students and community members, Board members and others, the Working Group identified the following strengths, aspirations and challenges.

The College’s overarching focus on students (including their current and emerging realities, needs, demographics, and mental health); the opening of a second residence with its potential contribution to students’ lives; the committed staff and faculty of the College; the vibrant worshipping community and the College’s location at the heart of the campus were all identified as College strengths. They also valued the continued presence of the Basilian community in the life of the College.

Aspirations for the College built on these strengths. Overall, stakeholders and community members identified the following aspirations: retain the focus on students and build on the things the College is doing well; be a welcoming place with curricular and co-curricular activities; maintain a strong emphasis on service learning and social justice; and create opportunities for integrated experiential learning. Those interviewed encouraged the College to continue to develop as a campus spiritual hub, a meeting place where students would find a footing in faith and a safe place to discuss religion and personal issues, and to develop its reputation as a centre for Catholic thought across the country.

The groups also identified several challenges in achieving these aspirations: limited or inaccurate knowledge of St Joseph’s College among University staff and students; static enrolment in College courses; weak linkages between the College and the wider community;
and limited fund development. They identified the importance of ensuring the continued success of the new residence; improving communications and enhancing a sense of community among College members; and maintaining good relations with the University of Alberta departments, faculties and administration. Overall, they stressed the need for stable finances and forward thinking in achieving the goals of the Strategic Plan.

Identifying Goals and Actions

The challenge for the College and the overall goal of the Strategic Plan is “to infuse the Identity and Mission into the everyday life of the College” so that the College can continue to contribute to the University of Alberta through its academic endeavours, promote the development of all those involved in the College community through its activities, and help serve the larger community beyond the University.

From the information gained through the interviews and from document reviews of the plans and activities of other colleges and universities, the Strategic Planning Working Group identified a number of initiatives. These were debated and then clustered, first into five groupings and then into three. Enhance our College Community became the first goal. The second goal, Engage the U of A Campus focuses on the links between the College and University students, faculty and staff and the third goal, Expand External Community Engagement, emphasizes relationships with the broader community.

Once these goals had been identified, items were reorganized, reviewed and debated until the actions to be taken to achieve these goals were clear. These actions became the second level of the plan. Under these are listed several activities which reflect directions discussed by the Working Group or provided through the various stakeholder interviews. Together, the goals, actions and activities will enable the College to fulfill its Identity and Mission as an affiliated college of the University of Alberta.

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9 Identity and Mission Statement, p. 3
Goals, Actions and Activities

Our three goals are:

Enhance our College Community

Engage the U of A Campus

Expand External Community Engagement

Each of the goals (labelled 1, 2, 3 below) has a list of actions (labelled 1.1, 2.1, 3.1) that provide strategic direction to the activities (labelled a, b, c) that help accomplish it. The actions and activities are not in any particular order. The activities will be more fully developed and a final list identified in the Strategic Plan Implementation document. They are provided here to give the reader a sense of what the action is meant to include.

1. Enhance our College Community

1.1 Improve present communications structures to enrich our sense of community

   a. Create a targeted communications strategy to keep stakeholders and community members informed about College activities
   b. Develop internal communications processes that include all College employees
   c. Develop and implement processes that enable effective communication among all teaching staff.

1.2 Review and improve policies and procedures for College decision-making

   a. Review College committees re: mandate, # members/ composition; minutes, distribution, reports, and ensure adequate information for decision-makers.

1.3 Increase students’ sense of affiliation with SJC

   a. Promote the notion of SJC as a single centre with diverse options (as a welcoming place, a place for dialogue, courses, service, worship, residences. cafeteria)
   b. Develop strategies that recognize the accomplishments of faculty, staff and students

1.4 Continue development of/support for an active, involved Worshipping Community
a. Identify and initiate strategies that engage students and other community members

1.5 Undertake succession planning for the senior leadership positions (President; Academic Dean)

1.6 Increase the College’s student base
   a. Develop an enrolment management strategy
   b. Explore the changing role of learning technologies and library services in meeting students’ information needs
   c. Expand opportunities for online, part-time, and off-campus learners and support their access to services such as library information
   d. Review and rationalize present and future course offerings in the context of student demand and the mission of the College to ensure quality and relevance
   e. Expand and promote experiential or service-learning opportunities, including international learning and community-service learning.
   f. Infuse course curricula with applied experiences through case-based projects, research, group work and capstone projects
   g. Provide workshops and resources for faculty and staff to increase understanding of Indigenous peoples’ cultures and spirituality
   h. Recruit outstanding sessional instructors and recognize the integral role they play in creating a high-quality learning environment

2. Engage the U of A Campus

2.1 Develop a campus engagement plan
   a. Encourage staff engagement with relevant university partner services
   b. Increase contact between College faculty and those in relevant U of A departments
   c. Explore new ways of engaging with University of Alberta to reduce duplication and enable common marketing to schools.

2.2 Support Interfaith Chaplaincy activities
2.3 Increase recognition of St Joseph’s College as a safe place that helps students obtain the personal, academic, social and spiritual supports they need

3. Expand External Community Engagement

3.1 Promote the Catholic Identity and Mission of the College
   a. Work with school systems to increase awareness of the College and the University among Alberta high school students
   b. Serve as a resource for Catholic schools
   c. Encourage and promote faculty research and publications that engage with the College’s Identity and Mission.

3.2 Strengthen donor engagement
   a. Work with others to develop a sustainable fund development initiative
   b. Link with former College students to raise awareness of present student needs

3.3 Seek opportunities that increase the College presence through former student and community partnerships

3.4 Engage the external community through programs and activities that meet the mandate of the College and the needs of the community

3.5 Encourage College-Archdiocese cooperation in pursuit of mutual goals.
What’s next?

We need your comments on our work.

We are seeking feedback on the plan’s three goals, actions, and proposed activities.

Comments and suggestions can be made by email to Margaret@campusinnovation.ca, and/or by participating in a meeting. These have been arranged with each of the stakeholder groups: students, support staff, professional staff, faculty, sessional staff, and worshipping community members. Margaret will chair the meetings.

The feedback will be collated and returned to the Working Group who will discuss the information and modify the plan accordingly. The document then goes to the Strategic Planning Committee of the Board for recommendation and to the Board for approval.

Meanwhile, once the administrator responsible for each action item and relevant activities has been identified, five-year plans for the implementation of the actions and activities will be created. These plans normally include who will be involved, expected start/completion, measures to assess success, and the person accountable. The plans will go through the College decision-making process.