



# Strength in History, Distinction in the Future

Strategic Priorities — January 2019 to June 2020

February 15, 2019

Saint Mary's College | Notre Dame, Indiana





# Prologue

Saint Mary's College is celebrating its 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2019. Since 1844, the Sisters of the Holy Cross have been identifying and meeting the needs of those around them. Continuing the Sisters' legacy, the College proudly educates undergraduate women and graduate women and men to consciously seek goodness, beauty, and truth and to respond to the world today. This means discerning the needs of God's people and the world and responding as one is able. When students engage in this transformational education, they leave prepared to merge their passions with the world's needs.

This document will lay out the **Strategic Priorities** on which we will focus for the next 18 months — from January 2019 through June 2020. It is the intention that these priorities be transitional and foundational, actionable and focused. This is a plan upon which a new president, anticipated to begin in June of 2020, can build the future.

The intention of this document is to outline three specific priorities that can be accomplished or worked toward to make solid progress in the time designated above. The identified priorities are derived from the work that took place and to which many people in the campus community contributed from fall 2016 to fall 2018.





# Saint Mary's Mission

## Mission Statement

(adopted 2/14/19)

**F**ounded by the Sisters of the Holy Cross in 1844, Saint Mary's College promotes a life of intellectual vigor, aesthetic appreciation, religious sensibility, and social responsibility. Saint Mary's is a Catholic, residential, women's, liberal arts college offering undergraduate degrees and co-educational graduate programs.

A pioneer in the education of women, the College fosters an inclusive, academic community where students discover and develop their talents as they prepare to make a difference in the world. All members of the College contribute to this mission in their response to the complex needs and challenges of contemporary life.

## Statement of Philosophy and Purpose

As a center of higher education, Saint Mary's fosters an academic climate of scholarship and learning for faculty and students alike. Through excellence in teaching and the example of its own active scholarship, the faculty challenges students to expand their horizons and supports them in their intellectual pursuits. A broad-based course of study invites students to think critically and creatively about the natural world and human culture. Acknowledging the need to prepare women for an array of careers, the College insists on a liberal arts foundation for all its students. Through their years at Saint Mary's, students acquire depth and breadth of knowledge, competence in quantitative skills and modern languages, the ability to think clearly about complex problems, and the capacity to communicate with precision and style.

As a Catholic college, Saint Mary's cultivates a community of intellectual inquiry, liturgical prayer, and social action. The College creates an open forum in which students freely and critically study the rich heritage of the Catholic tradition, raising the questions necessary to develop a mature religious life. The celebration of liturgy encourages students to explore the fullness of life and its mysteries. The College nurtures awareness and compassion for a troubled world and challenges students to promote human dignity throughout their lives. In preparing women for roles of leadership and action, Saint Mary's pays particular attention to the rights and responsibilities of women in the worlds of work, church, community, and family.

Dedicated to the personal and social growth of its students, Saint Mary's cultivates a community of students, faculty, and staff, which responds to the needs of women. In order to offer the richest educational experience possible, the College strives to bring together women of different nations, cultures, and races. It provides a residential environment where women grow in their appreciation of the strengths and needs of others. Through a host of co-curricular programs on campus and in the local community, Saint Mary's initiates students in the habits of civic responsibility. Engaging in all aspects of the college experience, students acquire the hallmarks of a liberally educated woman: keen self-knowledge, lively imagination, lifelong intellectual and cultural interests, and the ability to make socially responsible choices about the future.



## Interim President's Vision for Saint Mary's College

Saint Mary's College is committed to expanding opportunities and providing greater access to a transformative Catholic, Holy Cross education that fosters students' discovery of their God-given gifts and talents. A Saint Mary's education focuses on formation of the heart and mind through a personal faith journey, information acquisition, engagement in meaningful dialogue, and developing in students the ability to look critically at and respond to the world around them. Students, thus transformed, step confidently into the world, prepared to make a difference.

### Enduring Commitments at Saint Mary's College

- Saint Mary's will remain a Catholic, Holy Cross institution.
- Saint Mary's will remain an undergraduate liberal arts institution for women with graduate programs for women and men.
- Saint Mary's will remain a residential institution.
- Saint Mary's will remain committed to providing all students with a formative and transformative educational experience.
- Saint Mary's will remain committed to providing an environment that is welcoming to all.

# Strategic Priorities with Goals and Tactics

## PRIORITY #1

Enhance student access to the transformative experience offered through Saint Mary's undergraduate and graduate programs.

### GOAL 1

More efficiently identify and recruit a broader spectrum of students who will excel in the undergraduate and graduate programs.

### TACTIC

- *Engage a consulting firm to develop a Strategic Enrollment Plan to inform current and future practices for recruitment and enrollment.*

### GOAL 2

Increase capacity to offer endowed scholarships to attract and retain students from under-resourced and underrepresented groups.

### TACTIC

- *Identify and solicit 14 prospects to fund full ride scholarships. (Minimum level of funding \$1 million)*

### GOAL 3

Eliminate barriers and increase opportunities for students to study abroad regardless of their financial resources.

### TACTIC

- *Identify and solicit 15 prospects to fund study abroad grants. (Minimum level of funding \$100,000)*

### GOAL 4

Expand pre-college programs that have demonstrated success to attract and prepare students for a college experience.

### TACTICS

- *Seek \$400,000 to endow the Embody program.*
- *Expand weekend and summer pre-college programs that are self-funding.*



## PRIORITY #2

### Foster an environment that ensures academic and personal success for each student.

#### GOAL 1

Increase funded opportunities for student-faculty scholarly and creative activity and research both on and off campus.

#### TACTIC

- *Seek funds specifically designated to support student-faculty work regardless of discipline.*

#### GOAL 2

Improve retention, academic success, and graduation rate.

#### TACTICS

- *Examine models for increasing retention and promoting student success that might translate to Saint Mary's College.*
- *Monitor graduation rate and connect retention initiatives with improved graduation rates.*

#### GOAL 3

Refine curricular and co-curricular programs appropriate for the changing demographic of student.

#### TACTICS

- *Examine market research with current faculty to refine and identify appropriate academic major and minor offerings.*
- *Identify and foster academic and student life integrations.*

#### GOAL 4

Ensure a welcoming environment for underrepresented students.

#### TACTICS

- *Create new and enhance existing programs shown to be successful.*
- *Establish an Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.*

#### GOAL 5

Provide emergency support for students in need.

#### TACTICS

- *Establish a program for addressing student basic needs in security.*
- *Establish an endowed fund of at least \$500,000 to provide ongoing support for students in need.*

#### GOAL 6

Create a program to provide wrap-around services for first generation students and students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

#### TACTICS

- *Identify size of audience and scope of services needed.*
- *Establish an endowed fund of at least \$2 million to provide wrap-around services.*



## PRIORITY #3

### Strengthen and refine operational and financial practices.

#### GOAL 1

Assess and improve infrastructure for graduate programs.

#### TACTICS

- *Update business plans for all graduate programs to date.*
- *Explore need for and feasibility of additional support staff for graduate studies office.*

#### GOAL 2

Establish processes and practices to identify and address evolving risks.

#### TACTICS

- *Revisit our most recent Master Plan and establish priority list for deferred maintenance.*
- *Prioritize academic spaces and student living spaces for renovation needs.*
- *Continue work on Enterprise Risk Management plan.*

#### GOAL 3

Optimize operational efficiency and foster greater collaborations that allow for development of new and relevant programs.

#### TACTICS

- *Implement academic reorganization to free up resources for new programs.*
- *Maximize course delivery to reduce reliance on part-time faculty.*



# Conclusion

The **Strategic Priorities** listed in this document remain focused on two central areas – our students and the College itself. While the timeline is short, moving forward to address these priorities is essential to the future of Saint Mary’s. I am continually inspired by the wisdom and vision of the leaders before me, especially Sister Madeleva and Blessed Basil Moreau. Their words have guided my work at Saint Mary’s for over 30 years and I call on them now to help inform these strategic priorities and remind us of the vision of our early leaders.

Sister Madeleva wrote: “We will not promise you happiness. We will not wish you security ... We know that you can be secure only when you can stand everything that can happen to you. If the school has prepared you for this, it has been a good school.” She continued:

*“We promise you discovery:  
the discovery of yourselves,  
the discovery of the universe,  
and your place in it.”*

— Sister Madeleva Wolff, CSC

The manner by which we approach our work must change to meet the needs of twenty-first century students and must be adjusted to address the current pressures facing women’s colleges and liberal arts institutions and, indeed, Catholic colleges everywhere. Blessed Basil Moreau said:

*“How we educate the mind will change over time,  
but how we cultivate the heart is timeless.”*

— Blessed Basil Moreau

The priorities delineated here will serve to build on our strengths, allowing us to continue to attract and retain quality students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and move us forward for another 175 years!



Nancy P. Nekvasil, PhD  
Interim President



