

SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE

**ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION
AND
OFFICE OF ALUMNAE RELATIONS**

**STRATEGIC PLAN
2011-2016**

Adopted Fall 2011

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PROLOGUE

Early in the College's history, the Sisters of the Holy Cross understood the wisdom of staying connected with the alumnae. In 1879, the Saint Mary's Alumnae Association was established, making it the oldest alumnae association among Catholic colleges for women in the country. Following the biennial convention of the International Federation of Catholic Alumnae in 1926, Mother Pauline, president of the College, established the alumnae office and named Marion McCandless, class of 1900, as its first director. Miss McCandless' first responsibilities included the planning of the 1927 Reunion and the creation of a sample alumnae magazine. The Office of Alumnae Relations functioned as a part of the Alumnae Association until 1955, at which time the College assumed financial and staffing responsibilities for the Office.

A practice dating back to the creation of the Office of Alumnae Relations is what Miss McCandless referred to as "field work." This exercise involves members of the Office staff venturing away from campus to visit with alumnae wherever they may be. These "field trips" consistently reveal that the values and mission of Saint Mary's are being lived out by women all over the world, in all different kinds of households, and walks of life.

Under the leadership of President Carol Ann Mooney '72, who took the helm in 2004, Saint Mary's College has been recognized as a top National Liberal Arts College since 2008. In 2007, President Mooney engaged the College community in a process that led to the development of *The Path to Leadership 2012*, a Strategic Plan for Saint Mary's College. This plan reaffirms our desire to be a premier Catholic women's college in the liberal arts tradition. As such the plan outlines seven aspirational goals and 27 recommendations.

Four years into the Strategic Plan, much has been accomplished. The College 1) designed and is implementing a new general education program; 2) increased student diversity from 9% to 14.9%; 3) launched the Cross Currents Program, a new robust student-advising program; and 4) upgraded the campus through the construction of Spes Unica Hall, the academic building; the renovation of Madeleva Hall; and replacement of roofs on Moreau Center for the Arts, Regina Hall, and Science Hall. These successes coupled with other Strategic Plan initiatives currently underway have renewed the spirit of students, faculty, staff, and alumnae. As the President travels the country meeting with alumnae and friends, it is clear that audiences are energized by her vision and are hungry for greater engagement with the College.

For years Saint Mary's College has proudly celebrated the many accomplishments of her alumnae. However, meaningful engagement with our alumnae has been difficult to sustain. A decision was made in the summer of 2010 by College leadership and the Alumnae Association Board of Directors to develop an Alumnae Relations Strategic Plan. This plan will capitalize on the strong alumnae traditions and embolden the College to tap into the immense and expansive resources of its alumnae. This plan will also build awareness of the value that the over 18,500 alumnae can provide to the College as its largest constituency and ensure they are seen as an essential asset to the College's future.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

To begin the process of developing the Alumnae Relations Strategic Plan, a Steering Committee was established. The committee was comprised of two vice presidents, several alumnae representing three different decades, two of whom were former Alumnae Board members, two had also served as Alumnae Club presidents, and four had served on Alumnae Club boards. With the exception of one, the members of the committee are alumnae or alumni of other colleges/universities, so they brought knowledge of their own alumnae/alumni experiences to the table.

The committee met to discuss opportunities, best practices, and challenges. All of this was done without the assistance of an outside consultant. These discussions have awakened a new sense of possibilities engaging alumnae in the life of the College. The information gathered through these sessions, along with research and benchmarking, helped shape the basis for the plan. Members of the Alumnae Association Board of Directors, the College Relations Committee of the Board of Trustees, College administrators, alumnae, and selected club officers provided feedback that enhanced and transformed the plan.

The Alumnae Relations Strategic Plan will launch a new era for Alumnae Relations by forging relationships and partnerships with alumnae that span a lifetime. It builds on many strong programs including the Alumnae Association and Alumnae Clubs. The plan will be reviewed periodically to make certain we are making progress toward these goals and are responsive to new and innovative opportunities that arise. The College's ultimate goal is to foster and support an innovative Alumnae Relations program that offers her alumnae intellectual and spiritual benefits, as well as continued opportunities for support and connections.

It is believed that The Strategic Plan, as put forth, can be accomplished with the current staffing and funding available to the Office of Alumnae Relations and the Alumnae Association.

SECTION I

OFFICE OF ALUMNAE RELATIONS MISSION AND VISION STATEMENT

In its 84-year history, the Office of Alumnae Relations never adopted a mission or vision statement. Therefore as a part of this process both statements have been developed. For purposes of this plan the mission statement addresses the question: "Why does the Office of Alumnae Relations exist?" The vision statement describes what success will look like.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Office of Alumnae Relations is to provide alumnae and students opportunities for lifelong relationships with Saint Mary's College and to engage alumnae in the life of the College.

Vision Statement

The Office of Alumnae Relations is dedicated to supporting Saint Mary’s commitment to sustain meaningful and mutually beneficial engagement with alumnae.

ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION MISSION STATEMENT

Mission Statement

The mission of the Alumnae Association is to foster in its members the Christian ideals of Saint Mary’s College and to advance the goals of the College.

SECTION II

OFFICE OF ALUMNAE RELATIONS VALUES

Organizational values provide a framework for the leadership of an organization to encourage common norms of behavior that support the achievement of the organization's goals and mission. The values listed below signify the principles and moral standards that will guide behavior and decision making in the Office of Alumnae Relations.

Community	Tradition	Excellence
Creativity/Innovation	Commitment to Service	Spirituality
Hospitable	Commitment to Lifelong Learning	

SECTION III

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS (SWOT)

The Steering Committee began the Strategic Planning process with a SWOT analysis. This analysis produced a simple framework for providing a situational analysis. While strengths and weaknesses examine internal aspects of the operation, opportunities and threats identify external factors that may influence future work. The results of this exercise may be found in Appendix A.

Section IV

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Provide meaningful, lifelong opportunities for alumnae to engage and support Saint Mary’s College.

The Alumnae Relations Office and Alumnae Association exists to create and sustain lifelong connections with Saint Mary’s College. Continued and meaningful engagement with alumnae is the cornerstone of a premier alumnae relations program. The office exists to create and sustain lifelong connections with Saint Mary’s College. If we are to ask for

life-long engagement with the College, then the Office of Alumnae Relations and Alumnae Association must offer programs to interest and engage alumnae in all stages of life. This engagement bonds the 18,500 alumnae as permanent members of the Saint Mary's community and creates countless opportunities for their creative contributions to the College.

A. Design and support a range of purposeful opportunities appealing to alumnae throughout their life cycle that focus on enriching alumnae social, intellectual, spiritual engagement, and leadership development.

1. Refocus alumnae programming, specifically Reunion, to incorporate pre-Reunion workshops that cover timely topics.
2. Craft a strategy to expand outreach to affinity groups (e.g., minority, staff student) either through Reunion programming or events during the academic year.
3. Sponsor continuing education programming and spiritual development opportunities that appeal to alumnae of all generations.
4. Evaluate the effectiveness of the current alumnae travel program. Capitalize on new trends in travel that may include mission related trips and explore destinations related to specific events, such as the Oberammergau Passion Play.
5. Maintain a system to support Alumnae Clubs based on geography or other special interests.

B. Facilitate connections among alumnae so they can make significant contributions to each other and ultimately the College.

1. Evaluate, implement, and promote programs and electronic products that will facilitate alumnae interaction with each other and the College for the purpose of career networking, mentoring, business development, and spiritual renewal.
2. Promote strategies that support alumnae working together in a self-directed manner.
3. Research effective method to maintain and support virtual Alumnae Clubs or other virtual groups.

C. Provide leadership opportunities within the Alumnae Association to identify and ensure alumnae are prepared to take on significant leadership roles as College volunteers.

1. Define roles, expectations, and opportunities for Alumnae Club leaders and Alumnae Association Board of Directors members.
2. Establish systems to identify, train, retain, acknowledge, thank, and plan for succession of alumnae volunteers who will advocate for the needs of the Association and the College.

Goal 2: Foster purposeful student relationships and engagements that build lifelong commitments to the College and establish an identity as a Saint Mary's College alumna.

Saint Mary's students of today are the alumnae of tomorrow. The Office of Alumnae Relations and the Alumnae Association must find ways to engage students while they are in

residence, so that they remain engaged after graduation. If students are encouraged to feel Saint Mary's pride, and see it lived out by alumnae, they will be more likely to stay engaged. The connections are fostered in various circles with their alma mater and with each other.

A. Partner with strategic College programs/departments to identify ways to expand alumnae/student relationships.

1. Study current student activities to identify opportunities for alumnae to support activities valued by today's students.
2. Examine student engagement research to better understand student motivations for forming and joining groups and identify themes that are consistent with alumnae interests.
3. Create a student organization, like a student alumnae association, to promote strong student and alumnae relationships that enhance the student experience by providing opportunities that strengthen their life-long loyalty to Saint Mary's.
4. Cultivate current student leaders recognizing that they will be future leaders in the alumnae world.

B. Increase opportunities for alumnae to play a meaningful role with students.

1. Expand opportunities through the Alumnae Mentoring Program and LinkedIn to facilitate interaction between alumnae and students regarding career development and networking.
2. Incorporate input from student leaders in the design and implementation of alumnae-student interactions to foster students' ownership of programs.
3. Promote participation of alumnae leaders in existing student events such as Welcome Week and Meet Me on the Avenue.
4. Promote and encourage Alumnae Club and at-large Association activities supporting current Saint Mary's students.

C. Design alumnae/student interactions that will reinforce beloved Saint Mary's traditions and create and establish new ones.

1. Develop, support, promote, and enhance traditions between alumnae and students.
2. Actively participate in College programs and events to reinforce the alumnae presence.

Goal 3: Align alumnae volunteers and admission office staff to strengthen the recruitment of Saint Mary's students.

Prospective students have a number of educational opportunities and the competition for college-bound young women is fierce. The best and strongest advocates for a Catholic education for women are our alumnae. Including alumnae in the recruitment process provides them the opportunity to reconnect with Saint Mary's and stay informed on developments within the Saint Mary's community.

A. Identify and ensure alumnae are prepared to assist in recruitment effort.

1. Conduct annual training for alumnae representing the College at college fairs. Trainings would be available in regional/club areas, on campus, and/or online.
2. Develop an online community or site for volunteers that would provide training, reference materials, surveys, and other communication.
3. Institute regular and official communication between the Alumnae Relations and Admission Offices and alumnae volunteers.

B. Identify alumnae to host recruitment activities around the country.

1. Partner with Development and Admission Offices to identify new and meaningful recruiting events.
2. Partner with the Admission Office to create an “Informational Open House” event model.
3. Research and evaluate the effectiveness of hosting prospective parent events to discuss topics such as “how to finance a Saint Mary’s education for their daughter.”

C. Increase alumnae involvement in application process.

1. Include specific alumnae biographies in application packets, inviting prospective students to contact them with questions.
2. Offer prospective students the option to be contacted by an alumna.

Goal 4: Improve communications between the College and alumnae, and among alumnae.

Effective communication is an integral tool for quality alumnae engagement. Alumnae Relations must identify innovative ways to communicate with the College’s largest constituency, and likewise must provide, promote, and facilitate communication among alumnae.

A. Enhance and maintain Saint Mary’s College’s online presence.

1. Consistently provide information and instructions on how to connect with the College and each other electronically using programs such as the Belle Network.
2. Create and maintain convenient and attractive ways to stay connected with the College and with each other (Facebook, LinkedIn, website, online directory, online *Courier*, etc.).
3. Engage students and recent graduates by staying abreast of technology trends.
4. Research and evaluate the benefits of providing a robust online community for alumnae.

B. Collaborate to upgrade and enhance the *Courier* (the College’s magazine) so that it fosters a greater understanding of the College and the many accomplishments of its alumnae.

According to the 2009 alumnae survey, 94% said that the *Courier* is their primary source of information about the College. In the recent *Courier* reader survey, alumnae list Class News as the most important section (70%). The Feature section was the second most read section.

This confirms what the College has believed to be true: the *Courier* informs alumnae about each other as much as it informs alumnae about the College.

1. Encourage adopting a practice to conduct readership surveys every three years to understand current reader interests and trends.
2. Support the establishment of a yearly content plan that provides goals and themes for each issue.

C. Support and promote development of communication modules for Alumnae Club leaders.

1. Research and evaluate the best way to provide such a resource.

Goal 5: Increase alumnae giving to Saint Mary's College.

Through this plan, alumnae will have a greater presence and become more meaningfully engaged with the College. They will serve as ambassadors, advisors and mentors. As such, alumnae will come to understand the role that their philanthropy plays ensuring a vibrant future for the College. Annually the College is ranked by various publications, and alumnae participation in giving is viewed as a sign of grateful and invested alumnae. For fiscal year 2009-2010, alumnae participation in giving was 28%, which is much lower than other premier women's colleges or national Catholic colleges.

A. Develop and nurture a culture that embraces a conversation among alumnae about giving and assists alumnae in finding their voice through philanthropy.

1. Educate alumnae about the impact of their gift on the College.
2. Reinforce and promote a culture that acknowledges the importance of all gift and encourages dialogue among alumnae about philanthropy.
3. Identify opportunities to inform students about how they are benefiting from alumnae giving.
4. Collaborate with the Annual Fund Office to develop annual messaging about giving that persuasively articulates the reasons for giving to Saint Mary's College.
5. Identify ways to communicate the importance of the *Faith Always, Action Now Campaign* when it goes public.

Goal 6: Upgrade the College's alumnae database to better support targeted programming and communications for alumnae.

The College's ability to identify alumnae interests through student activities or stated interests is limited. For example, when the College wanted to host a staff student reunion, alumnae were not coded appropriately. This is not an unusual situation, in fact it, is common.

A. Upgrade alumnae data entry and retrieval.

1. Study and recommend improvements to the retention of data as students move to alumna status.
2. Expand the options available to code alumnae interests.
3. Make a concerted effort to update information regarding past activities, occupations and ethnic background.
4. Investigate software that allows alumnae to update their own information.

Appendix A

Results of the SWOT exercise

Strengths

- Reunion
- Cohesive team
- Alumnae Association is for all alumnae
- Relationship with development office
- Engages volunteers
- Responsive to alumnae needs
- *Courier*
- Recognize and acknowledge personal alumnae accomplishments and events
- Large number of engaged alumnae as demonstrated by the growing number of legacy students
- Alumnae are accomplished and represent a tremendous resource
- Traditional events such as presidential visits to the clubs, legacy receptions and the Alumnae-Senior Champagne Brunch
- Outside communication support for clubs and campus departments
- Social networking
- Alumnae Association Board of Directors
- Student recruitment by alumnae
- Sisterhood of alumnae
- History
- Passionate alumnae
- Easily accessible
- Alumnae are located all over the globe
- Open to new ideas
- Clubs
- Class reporters/news
- Collaborative
- Campus network
- Pride among alumnae
- Legacy
- Travel program
- Variety of club activities/programming
- Alumnae Resource Network
- Relationship/partnership with the University of Notre Dame
- Service-minded alumnae
- Affinity groups
- College sponsored office
- Alumna president

Weaknesses

- Resources—financial and staff
- The Alumnae Association includes all alumnae, does not require a commitment on the part of the alumna
- Untrained volunteers

- Ebb and tide of clubs
- Alumnae Resource Network is not available off campus
- Program limitations
- Difficulty in accessing alumnae information
- Limited ability for custom programming
- Poor recordkeeping
- Limited opportunities for alumnae engagement as speakers, resources
- Understanding of alumnae—expectations of events and programming
- Alumnae career counseling
- Lack of interest and awareness from students
- No student alumnae group
- Volunteer burnout
- No strong volunteer strategy

Opportunities

- Adding programs to Reunion
- Increase in targeted programs
- Evolution of technology
- Social media
- Alumna mentoring programs
- Student awareness
- Student interest
- New products for searchable alumnae data bases
- Affinity group interest
- Volunteer training and mentoring
- Interest in regional club programming
- Consider changing paradigm—alumnae pay to receive the *Courier*/be a part of the Alumnae Association
- Continued education

Threats

- Economy
- Alumna affinity with grad school, children's school
- Notre Dame
- Demands on alumnae time and money
- Natural life cycles or stages
- Church responsibilities
- Husband's priorities
- Volunteers
- Misuse of directory information
- Connection of alumnae/friendships overrule
- College resources/budget
- Admission decisions
- Society's lack of interest in joining/fear of commitment and over commitment