



President's Council Action Team The Santamarian Experience

December 2016



“Support for student success is a longstanding commitment at the University.”

Message from the President

In December of 2013, the President’s Council released a report entitled [*Promoting a Culture of Safety, Respect, and Consent at Saint Mary’s University and Beyond*](#). The President’s Council report put forward a series of recommendations to effect cultural change at Saint Mary’s University. The Action Team was formed to drive and monitor the progress of the implementation of the recommendations.

The President’s Council report called for the Action Team to provide six-month updates on this three-year project. At the end of its mandate, the significance of this report is to highlight where Saint Mary’s has landed with regard to institutional programming and new positions. ([Click here for details.](#))

Much has been done in these past three years. The Action Team under the leadership of Dr. Esther E. Enns has ensured that its many initiatives are well embedded into ongoing programming and operations of the University.

As an educational institution, we recognize the Action Team is an excellent mechanism to implement University-wide initiatives. The Action Team will continue to drive new programming and positions that resulted from the recommendations of the President’s

Council report. On a go forward, the Action Team will expand its scope and work on institutional priorities that will be well served by such leadership.

Support for student success is a longstanding commitment at the University. Our focus on student success encompasses not only academic excellence, but also the continued health and wellness of our students. The University’s Senate adopted a report in 2006 entitled *‘Promoting Student Success: Shared Goals, Shared Responsibilities.’* This document is the foundation for designing an effective learning environment and has been used in the development of the Santamarian experience – a year long process on learning how to become a successful student.

On behalf of Saint Mary’s University, I am pleased to provide an overview of the programming and new positions in place as part of the Santamarian experience.

Dr. Robert Summerby-Murray
President and Vice Chancellor,
Saint Mary’s University

The First Week of September

The first week of September for students who are new to Saint Mary's University is a key focus for First Year at Saint Mary's programming. Roles, responsibilities, and governance are in place for the University's onboarding of students. [Please click here to see the changes to the University's approach.](#)



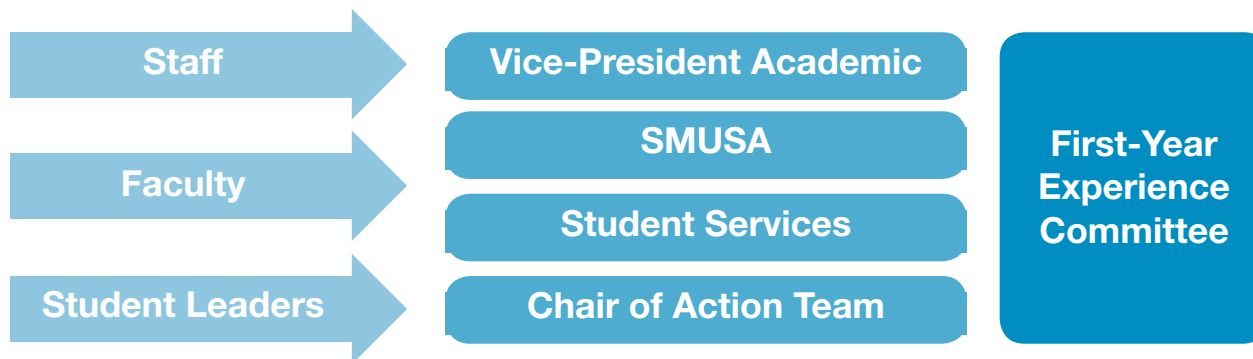
Transitions

The University has brought the academic faculties, Student Services and SMUSA into a collaborative working relationship, with staff members from those areas assuming particular roles for planning, organizing

and delivering orientation – both Welcome Week and the year-long experience. Saint Mary's has a Welcome Week and First-Year Transitions advisory committee that includes representation from Student Services, the academic faculties, and SMUSA who are responsible for overseeing the implementation of Welcome Week at Saint Mary's University.

Two new positions to support the activities of the Welcome Week and First- Year Transitions Committee. Student Services will add a Student Transitions Specialist (Student Development and Engagement).

The Global Commons Studio for Teaching and Learning will also add a Student Transitions Specialist (Student Academic Learning).



Student Transitions Specialist (Student Development and Engagement)

This position will be responsible for the promotion and coordination of campus-wide student programming that supports student growth and life skills development. This new position will work with all Student Services related departments, SMUSA, and community partners in developing and delivering programming with a particular focus on:

- The prevention of sexual assault
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Bystander training
- Health and Wellness

Student Transitions Specialist (Student Academic Learning)

This position will support the promotion and coordination of campus-wide transition programs that emphasize student academic success and skill development. The Student Transitions Specialist will be a key liaison with deans, program chairs, faculty, and other campus community partners in connection with student success programming including first-year transition into university and capstone transition out of university.

The Student Transitions Specialist (Student Academic Learning) is responsible for designing, developing and facilitating various elements of first-year transition programming, including coordination of Welcome Week and other academic activities that support incoming students in the first year.

Age Quod Agis

“The motto is an integral part of Welcome Week and First-Year at Saint Mary’s University.”



Welcome Week Guiding Principles

Welcome Week at Saint Mary’s is designed to support all new students to begin a successful transition into university life. Our interactions and work with new students are guided by our commitment to:

- **Belonging** – Saint Mary’s is just not a university but a community. All students should feel they are respected and valued members of the community, and be proud to call themselves Santamarians.
- **Achievement** – Saint Mary’s, at its core, is an academic institution. All students should feel confident they will be successful and supported in the classroom.
- **Engagement** – University can be so much more than showing up for class and studying. By engaging in campus life, students gain skills and experiences that will help them grow.
- **Thriving** – True student success goes beyond simply being academically successful, and all students should have the skills to not just survive, but thrive.

The Santamarian Experience – First Year at Saint Mary’s

At Saint Mary’s, our Welcome Week and First-Year programs aim to facilitate the transition of new first-year and transfer students to university by providing services, assistance, and programming throughout the students’ first year. We know that starting university can involve many transitions, and our goal is to equip our students with the resources, guidance, skills, and connections needed to successfully make the adjustment to a new academic, cultural and social climate. Delivering this information at the beginning of the university experience is important in helping students get off on the right foot and in addressing any questions or concerns they may have when entering a new phase in their lives.

Age Quod Agis

The University places a strong focus on the values of Saint Mary’s. Each year, students, faculty and staff embrace the theme of the University’s historic Latin motto: Age Quod Agis. The broad translation of Age Quod Agis is ‘Do What You Do’ - an invitation to take responsibility

and embrace the present with focus and purpose. The motto has become an overarching theme for Welcome Week and is on the Welcome Week calendar, banners throughout the University and during the Santamarian ceremony. The motto is part of Saint Mary's University's rich history, expresses the essence of the Santamarian spirit, and is an integral part of Welcome Week and First-Year at Saint Mary's University.

Santamarian Ceremony

Saint Mary's has a longstanding commitment to respectful behaviour. The Santamarian Ceremony is an event where University members share with new students the core values of academic integrity, the pursuit of knowledge, responsiveness to community needs, openness to change, and concerns for a just and civil society. The Santamarian Ceremony, a traditional-style matriculation ceremony welcomes new students to the Saint Mary's community and serves multiple purposes. It is a formal venue for welcoming new students, for inspiring commitment to the convocation, which involves a similar type of ceremony, and for introducing our core values as an institution.

Declaration of Respect

The University has a Declaration of Respect affirms our core values and aligns with existing Saint Mary's policies and procedures. The Declaration of Respect was first introduced during Welcome Week 2014-2015 as part of the Santamarian Ceremony, as a concrete way of explaining to students our core values. Incorporating the Declaration of Respect into the Santamarian Ceremony gives the document profile and ensures that students have a meaningful and memorable introduction to our behavioural expectations of them. They learn that Saint Mary's University is committed to the promotion of a safe and respectful learning environment, and that a safe and respectful learning environment involves more than just physical safety. It means that we are committed to valuing diversity and to encouraging compassion, empathy and respect.

Faculty Academic Sessions

Attention to first-year, or transition-year, success initiatives has been growing at Saint Mary's. The development of academic learning communities, peer mentorship program, university-wide academic orientation, and



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new workshops specific to the needs of first year students are all examples of this attention to students transitioning in to our University environment.

The academic faculties offer sessions that provide new students to Saint Mary's the opportunity to meet faculty, faculty advisors, student leaders and fellow peers. The sessions include onboarding activities to students' specific programs, other academic activities and social opportunities to interact with fellow classmates.

A goal of our onboarding program is to design such an introduction to our University values, and campus culture so that our new students can begin to envision themselves within the social fabric of Saint Mary's and begin to connect with or build their new community.

Creating an Intercultural Environment

Welcome Week has combined orientation activities for both international and domestic students. The University is committed to creating an environment that offers rich opportunities to advance intercultural learning for both domestic students and international students. The goal is to help students reach

a deeper understanding of cultural differences among diverse people, and to appreciate values embedded in cultures.

Winter Welcome

The Welcome Week Advisory Committee created a Winter Welcome for new students joining the University in January and has the same programming as September Welcome Week and is now part of institutional programming.

Cultural Safety

As part of Welcome Week, the University held safety seminars for new students. The sessions are part of First Year at SMU programming. Saint Mary's student leaders facilitate these well attended workshops and lead discussions relating to cultural safety and respect.

Cultural safety refers to an environment that is spiritually, socially, emotionally, and physically safe for people. Cultural safety is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and the experience of learning together. The goal is to make a safe campus even safer.

These workshops educate students on all aspects of safety on today's campus, including: developing student awareness around the

meaning of sexual consent, drug and alcohol abuse, and safety programs and policies.

Address Alcohol and Drug Abuse

The University has an Alcohol Advisory Committee responsible for recommending University policy related to the provision of alcohol services on campus. The Alcohol Advisory Committee is comprised of representatives from Student Services, the academic faculties, SMUSA, Security, Residence, Health and Wellness, and Alumni.

Programming efforts have been designed to promote and maintain the health and safety of Saint Mary's University's community members. The goal of all programs is to promote responsible alcohol use and to help students combat peer pressure to consume alcohol.

[Click here to see annual programming.](#)

Bystander Training

Saint Mary's University has been working with the University of New Hampshire since 2014. The University of New Hampshire is recognized for its prominent ["Bringing in the Bystander" training program](#). Providing education and



equipping people with effective strategies are key to preventing sexualized violence both on and off campus. Saint Mary's will continue the training across University sectors to ensure the sustainability of the Bystander Training program.

[Click here for more background.](#)

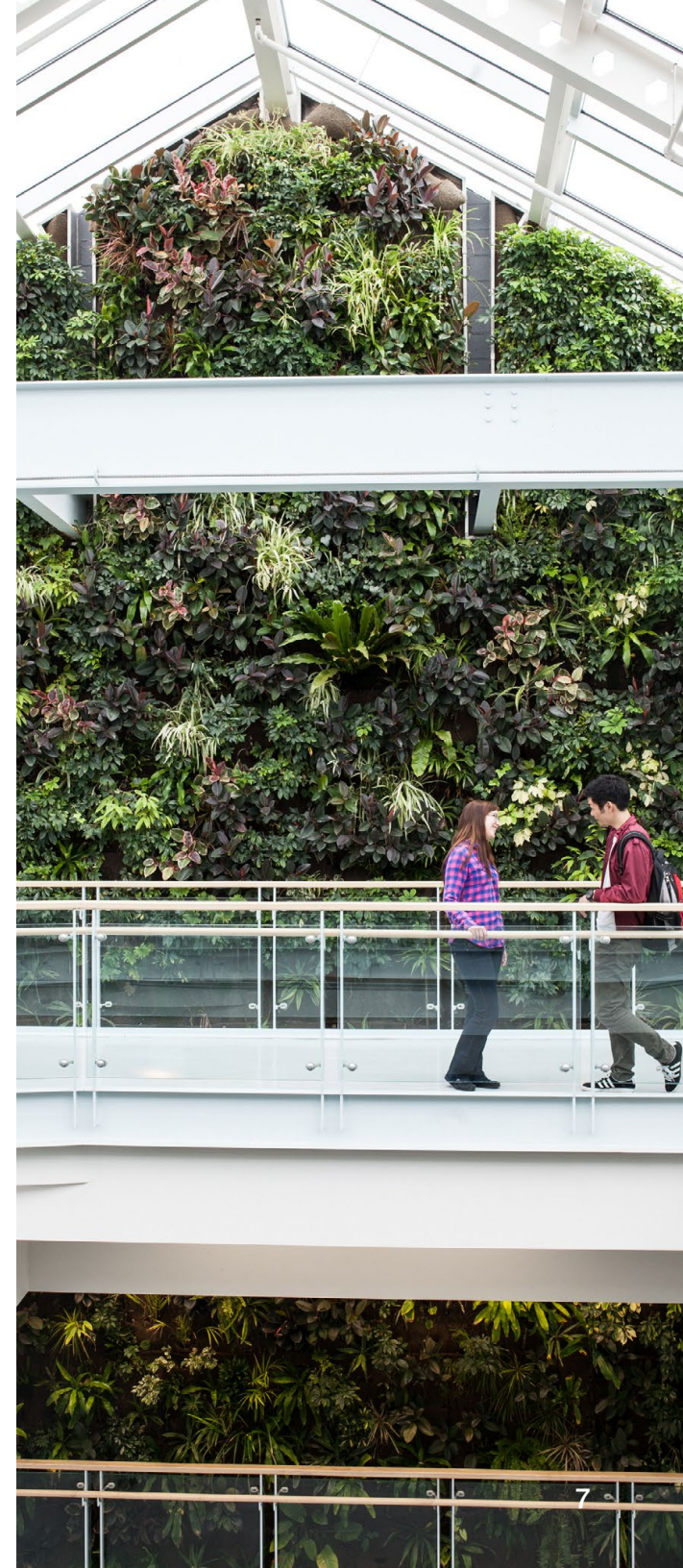


There has been significant support for the training initiative: students, faculty, and staff have received the training and others have been trained to deliver the training to other members of the University community. Over 400 people have attended 'Bringing in the Bystander' workshops. They have become a part of institutional programming and will be available throughout the academic year. Saint Mary's will continue the training across University sectors to ensure the sustainability of the Bystander Training program.

Understanding Consent

Saint Mary's understands that creating cultural change requires a number of ongoing educational strategies so that all members of the University community understand healthy sexuality and the meaning of consent.

The University has developed online training modules that serve as an educational foundation for affecting cultural change and ensure that the University's core values and policies are well





Campus Safety Survey

Saint Mary's University annually will be conducting a campus safety survey and will be carried out by the CN Centre for Occupational Health and Safety.

[Click here for more background.](#)

[Click here to see the survey.](#)

understood. Consent is one of the key topics of safety training programming.

Safe and Respectful Saint Mary's

[Click here to view Safe & Respectful Saint Mary's modules.](#)

The modules are promoted to students prior to their arrival on campus; they are be used during Welcome Week and throughout the year.

[Click here for an overview of University initiatives to educate students around consent.](#)

Promote a Culture of Diversity and Accessibility – Programming and New Positions

The liberal education at the heart of the University shapes young people's values and attitudes, and inspires all of us to build just and safe communities. At Saint Mary's, we engage in a culture of respect that acknowledges diversity and cultural intersection, and one that

supports civil dialogue. Promoting a culture of diversity and accessibility is at the heart of the educational and scholarly enterprise of the University.

[Click here for more background.](#)

Teaching and Research Excellence

Saint Mary's continues its ongoing effort to encourage and create an infrastructure for teaching and research excellence in areas related to sexualized violence and critical race studies.

[Click here to see our list of courses relating to the topic and further background.](#)



One University. One World. Yours.