



# An Update from the President's Council Action Team

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SAINT MARY'S  
UNIVERSITY SINCE 1802



## Message from the President

On behalf of Saint Mary's University, I am pleased to provide this update on the programming and new positions that are being developed in response to the President's Council Report, "Promoting a Culture of Safety, Respect, and Consent at Saint Mary's and Beyond."

The Action Team, led by Dr. Esther E. Enns, is mandated to drive and monitor the progress of implementing the recommendations of the Report. The Action Team has shown significant leadership and many members of the University community, including faculty, staff, and students, have worked to support and promote a culture of safety and respect. Much has been done and this past year the Action Team has ensured that many initiatives are well embedded into ongoing programming and operations of the University.

Saint Mary's is committed to accessibility, diversity, and the provision of a positive and supportive learning environment. We have built upon our 200-year history of academic excellence, accessibility, and community engagement.

Our focus on student success also encompasses the continued health and wellness of our students. The University sees Welcome Week as a launch into the Santamarian experience - a year-long process of learning how to become a successful student. We are striving to create a pan-University process

for faculty, staff and students to work collaboratively to build a comprehensive and coordinated first-year Santamarian experience.

Saint Mary's University has unique experience in the use of learning communities models. The University sees the adoption of a pan-university "learning communities" approach to the Santamarian first-year experience as a way to embed the key elements of the President's Council Report into curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular programming. The University is forming working committees with broad University representation to support these efforts.

I continue to see alignment between the strategic priorities that I formulated at the outset of my term as President and the programming being developed through the Action Team. Our approach to supporting students making the transition into university, formerly referred to as orientation, has become truly learning-centred and reflects the values of the University. The ultimate objective of a Saint Mary's education is to nurture and support productive, critical, and responsible citizens.

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



## Introduction

In December 2013, the President's Council released a report entitled '**Promoting a Culture of Safety, Respect, and Consent at Saint Mary's University and Beyond.**' An Action Team was formed to drive and monitor progress of the implementation of the recommendations presented in the President's Council Report.

Almost three years later, tremendous progress has been made in the implementation of the recommendations. In our final year, we continue our work to promote a safe and respectful environment for all members of the University community. Our focus has been to ensure all recommendations are well interwoven into University programming. The Action Team has identified a need for systems to be in place for continuing leadership and accountability that will carry the University beyond the mandate of the Action Team.

The impetus for the President's Council Report was an incident that occurred during Orientation Week 2013. As a result, many of the recommendations were related to the University's approach to orientation. Since then, members of the University community have placed considerable focus on the design of Welcome Week and the year-long onboarding process.

The first week of September for students who are new to Saint Mary's University is a key focus of the Action Team's work. Plans for Welcome Week 2016 are well advanced, and have been developed with a view to establishing a template to be used for the Santamarian first-year programming in future years. The goals and content of Welcome Week 2016 are based on the work of 2014 and 2015. Significant developments have occurred in the areas of roles, responsibilities and governance of the University's onboarding program for students.



## Changes in the Saint Mary's approach to “orientation”:

- Responsibility shifted to the portfolio of the Vice-President, Academic and Research
- The Santamarian experience re-imagined as a year-long process
- A joint venture among multiple sectors of the University: academic units, student services and SMUSA
- Written commitment to shared objectives, principles, values, and standards
- Agreement on content of programming
- Agreement on specified offices and staff to assume lead roles for various elements of orientation
- Mechanisms and processes for ensuring accountability
- Coordination
- Risk Identification, Assessment, and Management
- Responsibility of the University to Intervene
- Evaluation

In terms of defining roles and responsibilities for those involved in the design and delivery of orientation, the University adopted an approach that brings 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. To support this process, we developed a Welcome Week and First-Year Transitions Advisory Committee that includes representation from Student Services, the academic faculties, and SMUSA. For the future, The Welcome Week and First Year

Transitions Advisory Committee, reporting to the Vice-President Academic and Research, will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of Welcome Week at Saint Mary's University.

Two new positions have been created to support the activities of the Welcome Week and First-Year Transitions Advisory Committee. Student Services will add a 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 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

The Global Commons Studio for Teaching and Learning will also add a Student Transitions Specialist (Student Academic Learning). This position will support faculties in promoting and coordinating campus-wide transition programs that emphasize student academic success and skills development. The Student Transitions Specialist will be a key liaison with Deans, 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) coordinates the design, development, and facilitation of various elements of first-year transition programming, including coordination of Welcome Week and other academic activities that support incoming students in the first year.

These two new positions help provide support for students' comprehensive academic learning experience and engaging students to understand and build the culture of safety and respect that forms part of permanent University operations.

From its inception, the Action Team adopted the view that 'orientation' at Saint Mary's needs to be an ongoing process extending beyond the first week of September to include year-long programming supporting students' transition into the University. This programming will be the joint responsibility of the academic faculties, student groups, and service units across campus.

Welcome Week 2015-2016 was well received, and the Action Team recognizes that great progress has been made through the collaborative work of the Welcome Week and First-Year Transitions Advisory Committee and members of the University community.

## Welcome Week Guiding Principles

Our interactions and work with new students will be 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 is so much more than attending 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 not only to survive, but also thrive.

## Pack Leader Training

Student Leaders will attend Pack Leader camp for training. The training camp is jointly led by SMUSA, Student Services, and academic faculties. It is during this training that students learn the significance of the University's Latin motto, *Age Quod Agis*, and the importance of their role as student leaders and ambassadors for the University and its values.

## 2016-2017 – Approach to Welcome Week and First Year Programming

### The Santamarian Experience

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 life. 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.

We also recognize that we serve a diverse group of students, and strive to ensure that the needs of all students are being met.

### Age Quod Agis

This past year, the University placed a strong focus on the values of Saint Mary's. Students, faculty and staff embraced 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 became an overarching theme for the week and was highlighted on Welcome Week t-shirts, the calendar, and banners throughout the University and during the Santamarian ceremony. The motto is part of Saint Mary's University's rich history and was identified by students as expressing the essence of the Santamarian spirit. The motto on a go forward will be 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. To this end, the *Santamarian Ceremony* was introduced in September of 2014. The *Santamarian Ceremony*, a traditional-style matriculation ceremony to welcome new students to the Saint Mary's community, serves multiple purposes. It is a formal venue for inspiring commitment to the University and for introducing our core values as an institution.

## Declaration of Respect

The University developed a Declaration of Respect that aligns with existing Saint Mary's policies and procedures. The Declaration of Respect was first introduced during Welcome Week 2014-2015. Students 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 throughout different areas of the University. The development of academic learning communities, peer mentorship program, university-wide academic orientation, and 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 now 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 onboarding activities for both international and domestic students. The University has been 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. The Action Team continues to collaborate with stakeholders throughout the University who can play a supporting role in program development. The University has also introduced intercultural training for staff to further support these efforts.



## Winter Welcome

The Welcome Week and First-Year Advisory Committee created a Winter Welcome for new students joining the University in January. The same principles used for the development of September Welcome Week were applied. This approach demonstrates that the Welcome Week and First Year Transitions Advisory Committee remains committed to a “full-year onboarding” approach to supporting students in their transition into Saint Mary’s University. In the years ahead, Winter Welcome will be a regular part of institutional programming.

## Cultural Safety

As part of Welcome Week, the University holds safety seminars for new students. Saint Mary’s student leaders facilitated these well attended workshops and led discussions relating to cultural safety and respect.

These workshops have been created to help 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.

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.

## 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.

Programs are designed to promote and maintain the health and safety of Saint Mary’s University’s community members. The goal is to promote responsible alcohol use and to help students combat peer pressure to consume alcohol. Programming includes:

- Alcohol-free September/January Welcome Week events
- Alcohol-free floors in residence
- Mandatory server intervention programs
- Alcohol-free events
- Work with SMUSA to develop creative alcohol-free programs
- Promotion of alcohol-free beverages in student lounge
- Peer education
- Mandatory training for student athletes
- Mental Health Programming
- Participation in the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation’s ‘Keep it Social Campaign’
- Continued collaboration with the University and Student Association to support Health and Wellness Week.
- Survey to better understand drinking patterns that will help inform program development.
- Continued collaboration with national student services organizations.
- Continued utilization of Students NS programming

Saint Mary’s is part of the Canadian Collaborative led by Acadia University whose primary goal is to reduce harms with excessive drinking on university

campuses. In May 2016, Saint Mary's signed the Canadian Post-Secondary Education Collaborative on Reducing Alcohol-Related Harms project charter. The Collaborative provides a framework that will encourage and support its members in their efforts in the design of alcohol policies, the sharing of best practices, and program evaluation.

## Bystander Training

Since 2014 Saint Mary's University has been working with the University of New Hampshire, an institution that is widely 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.

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

Research reports show that consent is not well understood on the part of both men and women. 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 on-line training modules that serve as an educational foundation for affecting cultural change and to ensure that the University's core values and policies are well understood. Consent is one of the key topics of the [safety training programming](#) initially developed in



2014. The modules are promoted to students prior to their arrival on campus; they are used during Welcome Week and throughout the year. Other University initiatives underway include:

- Offering educational programs around consent and healthy sexuality as part of Welcome Week and continuing them throughout the year
- Incorporating consent as a significant component of all bystander training
- Continuing to build on existing peer-to-peer programming
- Utilizing the 'More than Yes' campaign developed by Students NS during Welcome Week and continuing it throughout first year in conjunction with the Student Union
- Conducting educational sessions on the topic of consent through The Centre for Housing and Residence Life during Welcome Week and throughout first year
- Providing mandatory training for Varsity athletes
- Providing mandatory training for student leaders

## Promoting a Culture of Diversity and Accessibility

At Saint Mary's, we strive for 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.

In February 2016, Saint Mary's opened a new Indigenous Student space, a dedicated on-campus location for Indigenous students to meet, work, share, and collaborate. This is just one of the many ways Saint Mary's is celebrating and recognizing the diversity of cultures on our campus, and fostering deepened respect among all members of the University community. By creating a dedicated space for the university's growing Indigenous student body, Saint Mary's is improving access and opportunities for Indigenous students at Canadian universities.

The appointment of a Director of Indigenous Education is another step in Saint Mary's goal to make the University more inviting and accommodating to Indigenous students, faculty, staff and members of the general public. Other initiatives already undertaken include flying the Mi'kmaq flag on special occasions; signing MOU's with the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, the Union of Nova Scotia Indians, and the Innu Nation of Labrador; hiring a full-time Indigenous Student Advisor; creating an Indigenous Advisory Council, and introducing new academic programming dedicated to Indigenous peoples' culture and history.

Saint Mary's has a well-established commitment to cultural diversity. We encourage and support the development of global perspectives.

Our international student numbers continue to grow and reflect our focus on global citizenship. The multi-cultural character of our campus and programs offers opportunities for personal enrichment through contact with diverse cultures. Saint Mary's is known Canada-wide for its excellent support services



for international students. Over 32 per cent of our students arrive from destinations beyond Canada, a proportion of international students not matched by any other university in this country.

We are recognized as Canada's leading international university. Saint Mary's University has been pursuing a deliberate strategy of internationalization for many years and it is now well developed on campus in terms of diversity in the student body, the curriculum, and in teaching, research, and staff communities.

The goal of the University is to support international and domestic students in their relationships and interactions with persons and groups of other cultures to cultivate global citizenship through practice and example.

Saint Mary's learning-centred commitment brings our community together in a complementary pursuit of learning; it lays a foundation for broadened and more meaningful staff, faculty and student interaction. At Saint Mary's we are a learning organization where our staff are continuously learning through training opportunities. Our goal is to build on our strong tradition as a caring and close community providing excellent service stemming from fully engaged staff, faculty, and students.

We are pleased with the expansion of Saint Mary's Service Excellence project which now incorporates intercultural training. This training enables staff to develop global perspectives and intercultural competencies for enhancing their effectiveness in international and cross-cultural dealings. It further demonstrates the University's commitment to creating an intercultural environment. The design of the program is in line with the UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education.

In the fall of 2016, the University will introduce the position of Diversity and Equity Advisor. This individual will be responsible for advancing diversity, equity and human rights within the University community. As well, the Diversity and Equity Advisor

will lead and be responsible for the design of all initiatives identified as being relevant to and having a significant impact on addressing discrimination, removing access barriers, and improving the overall experience for all students, faculty, and staff.

In May 2016, the Saint Mary's University Students Association (SMUSA) introduced the position Vice-President Equity & Wellness. The Vice-President Equity and Wellness works to represent students and student employees facing social, political, financial or other non-academic challenges by supporting equity and overall wellness. Equity, in reference to this position, refers to the quality of being fair and impartial to all students of Saint Mary's University. The wellness portion of the portfolio focuses on keeping all Saint Mary's University students in a state of good physical and mental health. The mandate of the Vice-President Equity & Wellness is to assist students in developing their plans for success by providing information about campus resources, support personnel, coping strategies and understanding different cultural heritages. SMUSA will accomplish these goals by student-led research initiatives, activities, workshops and programs to foster an appreciation for being respectful and receptive to individuals of backgrounds different from our own.

<b>Build a Foundation for Cultural Change</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
Communicate a Commitment to Action	✓	
Identify a University Lead and Create Action Team	✓	
Develop a University -Wide Code of Conduct	✓	
Gather Data and Shed Light on the Problem	✓	
Re-claim and Re-design Orientation Week	✓	
Revise the University's Sexual Assault Policy	✓	
Identify a Sexual Response Team and Improve Access to Resources and Training	✓	
Investigate and Discipline the Perpetrators	✓	
Clarify and Formalize the University's Relationship with Student Associations	✓	
Create the Right Structure, Clarify Roles, and Allocate Appropriate Resources		✓
Encourage and Create the Infrastructure for Teaching and Research Excellence in Areas Related to Sexualized Violence		✓
<b>Drive Cultural Change</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
Increase the Understanding of Consent		✓
Address Alcohol and Drug Use		✓
Empower the Bystanders		✓
Communicate Constantly and Purposefully about Expectations and Risks		✓
Promote a Culture of Equity		✓
Improve Safety		✓
Continue to Engage the University and Broader Community		✓
Collaborate with Others		✓
<b>Demonstrate Accountability</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
Evaluate Progress and be Accountable		✓

