St. Francis Xavier University

StFX Academic Plan 2023-2028

April 13, 2023: Approved by Senate Academic Planning and Priorities Committee

April 24, 2023: Approved by University Senate

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

St. Francis Xavier University stands on the lands of Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded home of the Mi'kmaw.

We express our deep gratitude and appreciation to the generations of Mi'kmaw who, since time immemorial, have loved and stewarded these lands and the beings who call them home.

Colonization is not just history; it exists in the present. While we strive to decolonize ourselves and our institution, we know there is still much for us to learn. We are committed to doing the hard work of self-reflection and to repairing relationships with the Mi'kmaw on whose lands we reside, including embracing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and embodying their spirit in our day-to-day lives.

Ms~t wiaqpulti'kl ankukamkewe'l l We are all treaty people.

Commitment to Truth and Reconciliation

As a signatory with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, StFX has committed to advancing the 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and to aligning with the Act respecting the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We will advance reconciliation by addressing the legacies of colonization and oppression in education, health, justice, governance, sport, and commemoration. As such, we are compelled to respond to the following Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

- Develop a collaborative strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.
- Advocate for funding equity for all Indigenous learners to close educational achievement gaps.
- Improve educational attainment levels and success rates.
- Develop and deliver culturally appropriate curricula.
- Protect the right to Indigenous languages, specifically Mi'kmaw, including the teaching of Mi'kmaw language as credit courses.
- Respect and honour Treaty relationships.

As treaty people we commit to advancing education on:

- Who are the Mi'kmaq historically and today?
- What are the Peace and Friendship Treaties and why are they important?
- What has happened to the Treaty relationship in Nova Scotia / Mi'kma'ki?
- What are we doing as the Xavierian family to reconcile our shared history to ensure justice and equity?

OVERVIEW

This Academic Plan sets StFX on a course to look significantly different in five years.
As we have come together to map the direction for this plan, our community has engaged in deep conversations about the educational experience we want to provide our students and about the kind of academic community we aspire to be. One of the important themes that has emerged is our community's strong commitment to looking forward. We are open to exploring better approaches, adapting, and revitalizing to retain our place as a leading educational institution within this region and across the country, and to position ourselves to serve and welcome people from around the world.

This aspiration for StFX to be an adaptable, forward-looking institution necessitates our responding continually to the changing needs of our local and global communities. The goals and actions proposed in this document will enable us to actively welcome and serve more people who have been underrepresented in our community or who have not traditionally been able to access a StFX education: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples; African Nova Scotian, Black, and other people who have been historically and currently marginalized and excluded; members of the 2SLGBTQAI+ community; persons with disabilities and individuals who experience barriers to accessibility; individuals who experience chronic and temporary/ episodic mental health challenges; people who have been socioeconomically disadvantaged; International students; mid-career professionals and recent graduates. Opening to more groups of students demands that the University demonstrates its willingness to transition away from past practices that have excluded people and to actively respond to what students are telling us that they need to be successful. While change challenges each of us, it also offers enormous opportunity to realize our institutional aspirations.

At its core, this plan recognizes the existing strengths and tremendous potential of our students. As a group they are socially aware, committed to principles of equity and diversity, adaptable, and collaborative. They push us to be better and to do better. Our students come to us from very different backgrounds and experiences and seek opportunities to grow and mature as individuals and as community members. This Academic Plan provides a blueprint for creating an environment where students have many opportunities to challenge themselves by engaging in varied and rich learning experiences, and this plan reflects our confidence in their capacity to successfully rise to meet those challenges.

This Academic Plan, StFX's first, establishes a clear direction for enhancing teaching, learning and the broader intellectual environment at StFX. This is also an operational plan as it lays out mechanisms through which we will achieve our goals. The next five years will include a period of capacity building, where we focus on putting in place necessary conditions for ongoing success. This plan is purposeful in supporting our faculty and staff through change as we advance and streamline our processes and infrastructure so that we are all able to work together toward this vision for StFX: student-centred, adaptable, inclusive, and forward-looking.

Some of the most transformative aspects of this plan include:

- Offering programs to more varied groups of students to meet the growing demand for educational opportunities beyond the traditional 4-year undergraduate degree. While we will maintain our focus on undergraduate education, we will also become an educational hub for recent graduates and mid-career professionals who want to continue to grow and learn.
- Renewing our curriculum through an intentional, interdepartmental approach that will ensure that, by graduation, our students meet basic learning competencies in specific foundational areas. We will also ensure that all our programs are accessible and inclusive.
- Supporting our faculty and staff so that the members of our community are empowered to fulfill their interrelated roles as educators and creators of knowledge. This will include a significant investment in faculty development around teaching and learning, as well as strategies that continue to cultivate a vibrant intellectual environment inside and outside the classroom.
- Improving the way we welcome, recognize, and support faculty, staff, and students from diverse backgrounds. It is not enough to simply invite more people into StFX; this plan sets a course to change the University so that more people can thrive here.
- Changing the way we work so that we are better able to be responsive and innovative while ensuring that our people are not asked to spread their effort too broadly. New and updated IT solutions offer one way to find efficiencies. In addition, we will review and revise existing processes and approaches to ensure we focus our energy on areas that most reflect our values.

What follows is an ambitious plan proposed against a backdrop of very real challenges; however, we present it with confidence in the talent, expertise, and commitment of faculty and staff to realise this vision for our students and our broader community.

Working collaboratively toward a common vision

The StFX Academic Plan is one component of an integrated planning framework that ensures that all members of the StFX community are moving forward collaboratively with the academic mission of the University guiding our decision-making.

- The Academic Plan reinforces the direction for StFX described in the new StFX University Strategic Plan (2023-2028), which outlines an approach to 'build our University the way it is meant to be.' At the heart of the University Strategic Plan is an integrated planning framework, where three operational plans - the Academic Plan, the Research and Creative Works Plan, and the Student Experience & Opportunity Plan - work together, driving StFX forward with focus and intention.
- Our Academic Plan concentrates on teaching and learning across the undergraduate and graduate environment at StFX. As such, it is aligned with the existing StFX Research and Creative Works Plan (2019-2025), with its focus on research activity. The two plans

reinforce each other, with excellence in research supporting excellence in teaching and learning, and *vice versa*.

- The Academic Plan also bolsters the approach to wholistic student development and well-being presented in the StFX Student Experience and Opportunity (SEO) Plan (2022). Both plans recognize the strengths of our students and empower them with opportunities to grow academically, personally, and professionally. The Academic Plan supports and reinforces the learning goals for StFX students identified in the SEO Plan: StFX produces students who are critical thinkers, future-focused planners, adaptable problem solvers, community-minded, engaged citizens, and innovative learners.
- The priorities outlined in this plan are buttressed by several other recent planning exercises: the StFX Accessibility Plan (2022-2025), the final report of the President's Action Committee on Anti-Racism (PACAR) (2023), the Library Strategic Plan (2022-2027), Human Resources People Strategy (2022-2027), and the reimagining of Continuing and Distance Education as StFX Online & Professional Programs.
- The Academic Plan reflects and is aligned with the work that is already underway driven by all of these planning exercises, each of which is informed by the values and priorities for StFX presented in the University Strategic Plan. As emphasized throughout our Strategic Plan, **StFX is academically driven; equitable, diverse, inclusive and accessible; community-minded; responsive; and sustainable.**

Understanding our current position

This Academic Plan emerges from StFX's current reality and is informed by recent trends in higher education in the region, across the country, and around the world.

Responding to challenges
Our planning is driven by the questions that are currently challenging us as a community:
- What kinds of programs, opportunities and learning outcomes are needed to prepare 21st century learners for the future, and what kind of learning opportunities do they want?
- How do we best prepare students to be active community members, responding to the world's current and future challenges?
- How do we diversify the students, faculty, and staff who comprise our community, and how do we better welcome and support them?
- How do we actively contribute to reconciliation with people who have not been welcomed in our community in the past?
- How do we differentiate our StFX approach to academics from that of other schools in the region and across the country, while simultaneously ensuring our programs respond to the changing needs of students?
- How can we change the way we work so that we are able to be nimble, adaptable, and more responsive?
- How do we ensure that the educational model that we offer is financially sustainable?

Moving forward from the COVID-19 pandemic

This Academic Plan also emerges from our recent experiences responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since March 2020, we have shown that we can be adaptable and agile, working together with the needs of our students and community members at the centre of our decision-making. While the pandemic caused unsustainable levels of disruption, our response demonstrated our community's willingness to come together and draw on our substantial expertise and commitment to student learning. The pandemic also exposed significant social inequities that we cannot ignore as we move forward, and it revealed the challenges and opportunities that come from learning and working online. The course we are setting for StFX is informed by everything we have learned in these past few years.

Building on existing strengths

The Academic Plan also builds on StFX's existing strengths and recent successes. We have:

- A vibrant student body. Today's students are forward-looking, collaborative, adaptable, and resourceful. They are highly motivated to find solutions to local and global problems, to embrace and celebrate diversity, and to live sustainably. Our students compel us to focus on the future.
- Dedicated faculty, instructors, and staff who share a deep commitment both to students and to scholarship.
- An engaging learning environment, where students are able to interact directly with faculty and teaching staff and where they benefit from a wide range of formal and informal learning experiences.
- A strong sense of community.
- A wide range of exceptional undergraduate programs providing rich educational opportunities.
- High quality and in-demand course-based graduate programs that serve over 500 students each year.
- Highly enrolled academic programs in health-related fields and robust health research activity bolstered by the creation of the Victor and Mona Dahdaleh Institute for Innovation in Health.
- A wide range of experiential learning opportunities.
- Existing institutes and centres including the Coady Institute, the Brian Mulroney Institute of Government, the Frank McKenna Centre for Leadership, and the National Collaborating Centre for the Determinants of Health.

Embracing change with eyes forward

While acknowledging our past, our Academic Plan compels each of us to keep our eyes focused firmly on the future.

- The plan honours the principles that motivated our founders: the pursuit of academic excellence and personal integrity embodied by StFX's motto "Whatsoever things are

true," and our understanding that education opens doors to a "good and abundant life for everyone," (Rt. Rev. Dr. Moses Coady). While these principles remain our touchstones, they also compel us to refine and improve our approaches in response to the world's changing realities.

- This plan also recognizes that we have explicitly and implicitly excluded people from our community. We now commit to working together to redress these wrongs.
  This plan supports the recommendations of the President's Action Committee on Anti-Racism (PACAR). The PACAR Report honours the commitment we have made as a signatory of the Scarborough Charter on Anti-Black Racism and recognizes the critical work that remains to be done to respond to the Calls to Action of the TRC, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, and the Mi'kmaw Language Act, which enshrines Mi'kmaw as Nova Scotia's first language. This plan also supports the commitments to equity and accessibility outlined in the StFX Accessibility Plan. Collectively, the strategies we present here demonstrate our commitment to building an equitable and inclusive community, especially for students, faculty, and staff who have been historically marginalized or excluded: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people; African Nova Scotian, Black, and people who have been minoritized; persons with disabilities and individuals who experience barriers to accessibility; members of the 2SLGBTQAI+ community.

- Our success as an institution will be built on our actions as individuals. This plan calls each of us to examine the way we approach our work -- to be open and willing to change. In the same way that we challenge our students to grow, learn, and change, we as faculty and staff must also embrace that spirit of innovation for ourselves.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND VISION

The StFX University Strategic Plan describes the values that we as a community endorse: StFX is academically driven; equitable, diverse, inclusive and accessible; community-minded; responsive; and sustainable.

These StFX values are enacted in the StFX Academic Plan through the following guiding principles, which underpin the liberal and professional education that we provide at StFX. Our commitment to these principles defines our collective approach to our work as scholars and community members.

1. **We inspire curiosity to drive academic excellence:** We are a community of scholars committed to the rigorous pursuit of the most current knowledge. Our commitment to learning compels us to cross disciplinary boundaries, to understand the connections between ideas, and to build relationships between people. It also challenges us to continually reconstruct ideas, systems, and processes in the face of new knowledge and new ways of approaching issues.

2. **We prepare graduates to be active, engaged members of society:** Our programs develop discerning users and producers of information, strong listeners, and effective communicators. Our graduates are active members of their communities, serving society with judiciousness, curiosity, and compassion.

3. **We understand that liberal education must be inclusive**: Liberal education includes an obligation to engage with diverse voices, experiences, and ideas. Engaging equitably with people from different backgrounds, aptitudes, and experiences enriches the scholarly enterprise. There cannot be academic excellence without inclusion.

4. **We enable continuous growth and learning across lives and careers:** We create opportunities for people to continually grow and learn, both personally and professionally. This includes creating new and different types of academic programming that support students' life-long pursuit of knowledge and their career aspirations. It also includes creating an environment where faculty and staff can continue to learn and advance their careers.

FROM PRINCIPLES TO ACTION

Informed by these principles, we have established the following TEN Academic Plan goals for StFX for the next five years. This plan also proposes actions that will be taken to achieve these goals.

The goals are organized around the following four areas:
- Academic programs
- Students
- Faculty & staff development
- Academic environment

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

1. GOAL: Update existing academic programs by aligning appropriate resources; renewing or revising program offerings; engaging in ongoing review; and making programs accessible to more students. This work takes time and effort, and we need to ensure that we have processes and practices in place that empower Senate, departments, programs, and faculty members to work efficiently and collaboratively.

PROPOSED ACTIONS:

1.1 Reduce the use of limited term appointments by giving priority to **hiring tenured and tenure track faculty** who have a balance of teaching, research, and service, and who experience less precarity of work. Given that tenured and tenure track positions carry a lighter teaching load than LTA positions, this shift may require departments and programs to adjust course offerings and/ or class sizes to realize the benefits of a more permanent faculty complement.

1.2 Refine the process that is used for the allocation of **new faculty positions** and communicate the criteria that are used each year and the results.

1.3 Review existing **degree structures** with a goal to simplify degree requirements and/or regulations. If we provide students with more course choice, supported by an enhanced approach to academic advising, we will empower students to create degrees that will best meet their personal and professional aspirations. This approach acknowledges that well-informed students are capable of making decisions for themselves. The revised degrees should balance depth and breadth requirements within the Major with as much course choice as possible outside the Major. More flexible degrees will also enable students to move between programs, improve access for transfer and non-traditional students, and allow students to access experiential and co-curricular learning opportunities more easily. While graduate programs and programs with accreditation or professional requirements will have limited flexibility, those programs should seek to enable as much choice as is practical.

1.4 Request the **Committee on Academic Review** examine the processes and procedures for responding to recommendations of CAR reports with an eye to ensuring the processes are efficient and there is clear accountability.

1.5 Recognizing the value of **interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary learning and research**, enact strategies that will encourage, develop, and improve the sustainability of interdisciplinary programs and collaborations.

1.6 Acknowledging the existing inequities in the quality of our **built environment** with respect to accessibility, pedagogical capacity, and functionality for research, ensure that campus space planning exercises prioritize access to sustainable and functional spaces for all members of our community.

1.7 Work collegially to develop a **teaching and lab infrastructure** evergreening program that is sustainable going forward.

1.8 Develop a **Recruitment Plan,** operational in nature, that will support the goals and objectives of this Academic Plan. In particular, the Recruitment Plan should outline strategies that will attract and enable diverse groups of learners to come to StFX: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people; African Nova Scotian, Black, and people who have been historically and are currently marginalized and excluded; persons with disabilities and individuals who experience barriers to accessibility; members of the 2SLGBTQAI+ community; International students; mature learners; mid-career professionals; first-generation students. The Recruitment Plan should also consider how recruitment efforts can begin prior to high school (e.g., through collaboration with outreach activities such as youth athletics and StFX camps).

1.9 Clarify the roles that the Recruitment Office and academic departments/programs, chairs/ coordinators, and faculty members play in the **student recruitment process**. While all members of the StFX community have a role in recruitment, there are practical limits to the ways that various groups can contribute, and added clarity will establish parameters for that participation.

1.10 Request **Senate review its committee structure**, mandates, terms of reference and composition in order to identify opportunities to simplify and streamline membership and processes so we can make the best use of the human resources we have available. The

process should clarify committee responsibilities, identify duplication or gaps in processes, promote timely decision-making, encourage consultation, enable participation by diverse voices, and support active participation in collegial governance processes.

1.11 Enable data-driven decisions by providing the community with easily accessible **academic data**. Develop expertise in each academic department/ program in accessing and sharing data.

1.12 Facilitate opportunities for staff in academic support areas (e.g., Service Learning, International Exchange, Co-op, Student Success Centre) and the University Library to build **communities of practice**, create and share resources, identify service gaps, and collaborate on the best strategies for supporting academic programs and students.

2. **GOAL: Develop new academic programs that will meet the evolving needs of students and that will increase overall enrolment. Some of these new programs should concentrate on attracting recent university graduates and mid-career professionals, international students, and other diverse and currently underserved groups of students. Our mix of programs should recognize that people often need to study in programs of different lengths and types offered through flexible delivery models (e.g., full-time or part-time; on-campus or off-campus; online or hybrid; flexible starts; summer terms).**

PROPOSED ACTIONS

2.1 Initiate an open **call for ideas** for new programs and credentials. Prioritize development of new credentials that will increase overall enrolment and meet the needs of diverse groups of learners.

2.2 Prioritize opportunities to align new programs and credentials with areas of **research strength**, including StFX's four priority research themes: Healthy Peoples and Communities; Climate and Environment; Cultures, Societies and Development; Public Policy, Government & Leadership.

2.3 Provide professional **staff support** for departments or groups that undertake new program development and/or extensive program renewal.

2.4 Recommend APP review the existing, Senate-approved **process for creating new courses, programs, and credentials** with an eye to clarifying standards and, as appropriate, streamlining the process needed to implement such initiatives.

2.5 Provide clear information about the **resources** that will be invested in academic departments that increase enrolment by creating new programs or undertaking other initiatives.

2.6 **Establish a trial phase** for each new program/credential with the understanding that newly launched programs/credentials may not perform as expected and some may have to be significantly revised or discontinued. The length and parameters of the trial phase will vary for each program based on factors such as the time it takes for students to complete the program and the resource demands. The trial phase will be guided by pre-determined targets for enrolment, a plan for rolling out new courses or sections, and a plan for hiring part-time, LTA, and/or permanent faculty or staff positions. During the trial phase, regular reviews will assess enrolment, unanticipated impacts, resources, and will suggest modifications as needed.

2.7 Leveraging their expertise and historic role in managing and administering professional programs, engage **StFX Online Learning and Professional Studies** (formerly Continuing and Distance Education) as the administrative support hub for online courses, in-person course-based graduate programs, and/or alternative credentials. This may involve tasks such as processing applications, communications with students, answering registration questions, responding to inquiries, and directing students to other offices as needed.

2.8 Put in place the necessary infrastructure and processes to support a **year-round education model** (e.g., create formal January and May intakes and a formal January term; explore the opportunities and the challenges of delivering specific types of courses - online, in-person, graduate, or undergraduate - throughout the year).

3. **GOAL: Take a systematic, equity-based approach to ensuring students develop strong academic foundations in specific, cross-disciplinary skills and knowledges. Identify appropriate approaches to achieving this goal for undergraduate and graduate programs. This intentional approach to curriculum design can become a way to differentiate learning at StFX.**

PROPOSED ACTIONS

3.1 Take an intentional and coordinated approach to ensuring that, by graduation, all undergraduate students are proficient in the following **high priority learning areas and competencies,** all of which are foundational to education and key to preparing our students both for careers and to be active, engaged members of their communities:
  - Academic writing and communication skills.
  - Understanding how systemic barriers to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility limit us as a society and the ways in which we can respond to those barriers.
  - Understanding how to be judicious consumers of information, able to recognize and counter misinformation and disinformation. This will involve understanding how knowledge is created and disseminated, as well as relevant elements of scientific literacy, information literacy, numeracy, data literacy, digital literacy, media literacy, and visual literacy.

3.2 With the cooperation of the appropriate Senate committees (existing or *ad hoc*), and drawing on the expertise of interested faculty members, departments, programs, the University Library, and relevant staff areas, create a **working group** to explore the implementation of each priority learning area and competency in **undergraduate programs.** Each working group will:
  - Assess the learning opportunities and expertise that currently exists at StFX around each learning area to identify gaps and opportunities.
  - Recommend high-level learning outcomes related to each area that can be scaffolded throughout the undergraduate degree.
  - Recommend strategies to achieve those outcomes. This may involve offering for-credit and/or non-credit learning experiences; changes to academic regulations; using existing or new courses; creating mechanisms to identify courses that contain relevant content at registration; supporting departments in curriculum review. The

strategies may require investments in speakers, visiting scholars, conference travel, course release or hiring. The recommended approach may consist of a multi-year plan that will be phased in over time. The strategies should be adaptable and sustainable going forward.

- Recommend a framework for assessing whether these learning outcomes have been met by graduates.

3.3 Request the Committee on Graduate Studies consult with graduate programs to develop an appropriate approach for addressing these priority learning areas and competencies in **graduate programs**.

3.4 Create **faculty development** opportunities for instructors to explore the ways in which they can contribute to addressing these priority learning areas within their courses.

3.5 Engage the **whole of the academic community** in creating opportunities for students to explore these priority learning areas, both inside and outside the classroom (e.g., workshops, speakers, special events).

3.6 Ensure that StFX's approach to these educational priority areas is promoted in **recruitment** messaging as a differentiating feature of a StFX education.

STUDENTS

4. **GOAL: Enhance the first-year experience, setting the groundwork for success throughout a student's time at StFX. Initiatives that support incoming students should reinforce a consistent message about the values that we demand of all Xaverian scholars: academic integrity, personal integrity, embracing challenges, curiosity, inclusiveness, and service.**

PROPOSED ACTIONS:

4.1 Work collaboratively with the Students' Division (e.g., Student Life, Health and Counselling, Diversity Engagement Centre) to design and deliver **non-credit academic-focused programming** to students before arrival, during orientation week, and throughout the first year that reinforces the values of Xaverian scholars. Reimagine the position and purpose of Academic Day as part of those activities.

4.2 Implement a first-year **academic transition program** that positions upper-year students to act as role models, sets high expectations for first-year participation, and is incentivized.

4.3 Working collaboratively with Students' Division and responding to the recommendations of the PACAR report, support the implementation of strategies that will prepare **historically underrepresented students** for academic success in their first year.

4.4 Assess the needs of new **international students** to identify the additional academic supports or accommodations that may be needed to help them successfully transition into the first year of their Canadian university education.

4.5 Ensure that **appropriate and accessible academic supports** are in place to meet the needs of mature learners, first-generation students, online learners, graduate students, international students and ensure that pre-arrival communication is appropriate to the audience.

4.6 Monitor **retention rates** among students in order to intervene with new support strategies as needed. This may involve assessing retention of students based on self-reported aspects of identity as well as tracking retention by year-of-study and program.

4.7 Support **academic departments and programs** to create and implement their own strategies for welcoming and supporting first-year students.

4.8 Support the development of a **community of practice** among instructors of courses that are commonly taken by first-year students. Create targeted professional development opportunities for these instructors to help them address the diverse needs of incoming students. Create a forum for instructors of first-year courses to meet with the Deans, Students' Division staff, Associate Dean Academic Affairs, and other relevant groups to discuss emerging issues and identify interventions.

4.9 Working with the Students' Division, develop and communicate clear protocols and processes for **sharing student information** and collaborating on student supports back and forth between academic and VP Student areas.

4.10 Evaluate and hone the **early alert system** and supports for students who are at academic risk at mid-term.

4.11 Explore the viability of resuming a version of the former **faculty advisor program** where incoming students are required to meet with a faculty member from their Faculty sometime during first year. This program, if revived, should have clearly defined objectives and be aligned with the services already provided by the Academic Advising Office.

4.12 Implement a requirement for all **first-year students to meet with an Academic Advisor**, either individually or in program-related groups, prior to registering for second year courses. This process should help students develop an early relationship with Academic Advising, provide students practical information about course selection and program options, and generate planning information about the programs/courses they are interested in taking in subsequent years.

5. **GOAL: Ensure a StFX education is accessible and welcoming to more and different types of students. This will involve championing the academic-related recommendations of the StFX Accessibility Plan and the report of the President's Action Committee on Anti-Racism. This will also involve adapting the ways we deliver services so that all students can see themselves as active members of our learning community.**

PROPOSED ACTIONS

5.1 Review the existing approach to **scholarships and bursaries**, including those for international and graduate students, to ensure that StFX offers competitive funding and uses scholarship and bursary funds strategically to increase access and enrolment.

5.2 Review policies around **admission decisions** to ensure they are grounded in equitable practices.

5.3 Design and provide appropriate **academic supports** for diverse groups of students: international, graduate students, students in online programs, students with accessibility needs, students from historically excluded and/or marginalized groups.

5.4 Continue to review and hone processes by which **students self-identify** by age, ethnicity, first language, disability, and/or gender identity, and create reporting mechanisms that

enable us to use that information to track changes over time and provide appropriate supports as needed.

5.5   Explore the creation of a **prior learning assessment** policy that will allow more mature and non-traditional learners to access a StFX education.

5.6   Update our **student information systems and IT systems** so that students can have more self-service options, including during their application process and for degree audits.

5.7   Develop our offering of **online undergraduate courses** so that students have more choice in the way that they complete their degrees. This should include exploring the creation of some asynchronous, flexible-start courses that will allow students to access education outside of the normal term dates. Continue to resource and develop pedagogical and technological supports for online learning.

5.8   Encourage faculty to adopt **Open Educational Resources (OERs),** when appropriate, to reduce costs and increase access for students.   Continue to collaborate with Students' Union on efforts to expand the availability of OERs and to honour the gift of the Class of 2022, which seeks to make textbooks more affordable to students.

5.9   Ensure that StFX's **IT systems** (e.g. the learning management system and the student information system) **and the StFX website** use the best technology; are user-friendly and accessible; and provide students seamless access to relevant information from recruitment, through application, and during their time as students. Include faculty and student perspectives in the testing and implementation of systems.

5.10 Actively promote a strategy for **student transfer** by developing articulation agreements, providing accessible information about college and university transfer credits, and by intentionally considering the needs of college graduates and other transfer students in the design of academic programs and academic regulations.

5.11 Understanding that the StFX community comprises students of all faiths and of no faith, review academic **policies, processes, term dates, and ceremonies** to ensure they recognize, accommodate, and are equally welcoming to all students.

6.   **GOAL: Prepare students to transition out of university by providing more opportunities for them to explore career and further educational opportunities. This includes promoting opportunities for experiential education as a way for students to draw connections between the classroom, real world applications, and careers.**

PROPOSED ACTIONS

6.1   Support **departments, programs, and/or faculties** to implement strategies that help students make connections between their academic program and career paths. This may involve, for example, developing website resources, holding career fairs, expanding the current model of departmental non-credit seminars, and/or introducing additional co-op programs.

6.2   Encourage and support the **StFX Career Centre** to collaborate with departments and programs on developing events and resources that will help students explore professional opportunities.

6.3   Encourage collaboration between the Student Success Centre, the Office of Research and Graduate Studies, and the Career Centre to develop a process and resources to support

students applying to graduate programs. This collaboration may include the creation of central website hub. The resources will supplement the work that individual faculty members undertake in supporting these students.   The offices should also promote supports for students who are applying for post graduate external funding awards and prestigious scholarships (e.g., CGS-M, Rhodes, McCall-MacBain).

6.4 Adapt the academic advising model to allow Chairs, Academic Advisors, and others more time for discussions with students about selecting courses that will help them to meet their personal and professional goals. In order to facilitate this change, implement **degree auditing software** which will decrease the time advisors currently spend discussing degree compliance.

6.5 Develop and implement a process that allows courses that offer **service learning to be indicated in the timetable** so that students are aware at registration. This same mechanism can also be used to indicate other specific attributes of courses, such as the inclusion of Indigenous content or course that are writing intensive.

6.6 Work collaboratively with Student Life, the Career Centre, and other related groups on efforts that **help students understand how to articulate and document** the ways in which their curricular learning and co-curricular experiences connect to workplace opportunities. This should include collaboration with the Students' Union, Students' Division, and other related areas on developing an experiential learning record.

6.7 Create an administrative structure that enables greater **cooperation between offices that coordinate experiential learning** activities (e.g., undergraduate research, Service Learning, Co-operative Education, International Exchange, and related Students' Division areas). This mechanism will enable the groups to work collaboratively to develop an integrated experiential and co-curricular framework for enhancing experiential education at StFX.

6.8 Create **a virtual hub for experiential education** that gives students a single place to explore multiple curricular and co-curricular opportunities.

6.9 Implement strategies that will **reduce barriers** to participation in experiential learning opportunities for students from historically underrepresented populations.

6.10 Enable more students to participate in experiential learning opportunities by challenging **academic policies and practices** that currently limit participation (e.g., improving access to courses across the calendar year, and allowing more flexibility built into degree requirements for programs).

FACULTY & STAFF DEVELOPMENT

7. **GOAL: Support new and experienced faculty members, teaching staff, lab instructors, dietetic educators, nurse educators, and skills instructors from all departments and programs in the ongoing renewal of their pedagogy and course curricula.**

PROPOSED ACTIONS

7.1 Create a sustainable leadership model for the **Teaching and Learning Centre** that includes appointing a faculty member to serve as Director. The Director will work in consultation with the Faculty Development Committee and other relevant groups.

7.2 Hire **educational developers** to support the Director in the day-to-day work of the Teaching and Learning Centre by facilitating a range of professional development opportunities and working directly with instructors.

7.3 In cooperation with the Teaching and Learning Centre and the Faculty Development Committee, request Senate establish processes that guide and support faculty to **review new and existing courses to ensure they support StFX's EDIA goals.** This may include creating frameworks or toolkits that can guide instructors. The rollout of these toolkits should be accompanied by professional development opportunities that will build understanding and support. Given the scale of this work, it may make sense to adopt a coordinated, phased-in approach to implementation (e.g., starting with first year-courses and then moving to upper year courses).

7.4 Offer a suite of **teaching development opportunities around EDIA** that respond to the variety of learning needs of faculty members (e.g., introductory and advanced topics; delivered University-wide, at the department level, or one-to-one; online and in-person; shorter and longer time commitments). These EDIA professional development opportunities will include best-practice principles of anti-racist education and Universal Design for Learning and respond to other related recommendations of the StFX Accessibility Plan, the PACAR Report, as well as StFX's commitments to the Calls to Action of the TRC and Treaty Education. Teaching development opportunities around EDIA should also support and enable faculty and teaching staff to contribute to the relevant mental health and wellness recommendations of the Student Experience and Opportunity Plan.

7.5 Expand and coordinate professional development opportunities and resources related to **academic integrity** to enable faculty and teaching staff to adjust pedagogy and assessment strategies to respond to potential disruption caused by artificial intelligence.

7.6 Offer professional development opportunities focused on **high-impact teaching practices** (e.g., writing intensive courses, work integrated learning, course-based research) to support and build communities of practice around these pedagogies.

7.7 Consider how the model of **Chairs in Culturally-Relevant Pedagogy (CRP)** can best be expanded to a broader program that will contribute to faculty development in not only CRP but also support efforts in additional priority areas (e.g., accessibility, first-year experience, the pedagogy of writing).

7.8 Implement a **faculty grants program** to support the creation and dissemination of research related to the scholarship of teaching and learning at StFX.

7.9 Continue the collaboration with the Maple League to develop and support the delivery of a **Certificate in Teaching and Learning** program available to instructors at all stages of their career. Clarify how credentials such as this are used in the promotion and tenure process.

7.10 Increase access to high-quality **online learning** opportunities for undergraduates, graduate students, and other learners by investing in faculty development for those who teach online, online learning infrastructure, and supports for online students.

8. GOAL: Support faculty to develop through all stages of their career (emerging scholars, mid-career professionals, and experienced members) by offering more opportunities for professional development and collaboration that will enable individuals to achieve their professional aspirations.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

8.1   Recommend that the AVP and Deans, the StFX Association of University Teachers (AUT), and the Rank and Tenure Committee collaborate to ensure that clear expectations are communicated to **tenure track faculty** members about how they should divide their time between teaching, scholarship, and service activities. Ensure that those who mentor new faculty, both formally and informally, communicate a consistent message about that balance.

8.2   Recommend that the University and the StFX Association of University Teachers (AUT) collaborate on a process that will **recognize and value the professional and lived experience** of new faculty members whose previous experience is related to their academic appointment. In particular, clarify the way that professional and lived experience is used in placement on the hiring scale and recognition for promotion and tenure.

8.3   Develop a formal **mentorship** program for pre-tenure faculty, supporting them to excel in teaching, research, and service.

8.4   Support the efforts of the Department of People and Culture (formerly Human Resources) to expand training opportunities for faculty members interested in exploring **leadership opportunities** and in other workplace-relevant skills. These opportunities should be tailored to meet the changing needs of people across the stages of their careers.

8.5   Recommend that the University and the StFX Association of University Teachers (AUT) collaborate on policies that will increase **flexibility or incentives** for members who participate in innovative projects that increase enrolment (e.g., a 3 cr-course release while developing a new program).

8.6   Encourage and facilitate opportunities for instructors to **team teach courses** within and across Faculties.

8.7   Support StFX's academic Institutes and Centres to create opportunities for faculty **networking** across disciplines and for **collaborative interactions** between faculty and related professional communities.

8.8   Encourage departments and programs to **share faculty positions** by creating strategies, policies, and practices that enable interdisciplinary appointments.

8.9   Support efforts of the Office of Advancement to secure more **endowed or externally-funded professorships**.

ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

9. GOAL: Ensure that our faculty and staff complement comprises people who represent the racial and cultural diversity of Canada today by supporting initiatives presented in the StFX Accessibility Plan, the PACAR report, and the StFX Human Resources Plan.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

9.1 Working with the People and Culture department, the Office of Human Rights and Equity, unions, and units, implement policies and practices that will increase the percentage of **new faculty and academic staff hires from historically underrepresented groups**. The policies and practices should reflect the approach endorsed by Canada Research Chair program and described in their guide *Creating an Equitable, Diverse and Inclusive Research Environment: A Best Practice Guide for Recruitment, Hiring and Retention.* These strategies might include actions to promote and communicate StFX's EDIA objectives, changes to search processes, flexibility in search timelines, and/ or cluster hires. The hiring strategies must be supported by robust retention strategies.

9.2 Develop an intentional approach to **retention and promotion of faculty and staff from historically underrepresented** groups that is grounded in the best practices identified by the CRC Best Practice Guide. The strategies should include the use of regular environmental scans to identify and address systemic barriers; the creation of an enhanced mentorship program; the dissemination of information about the promotion process; the development of a mechanism for swiftly responding to instances of discrimination; an ongoing campus-wide education about the value of diversity; and an ongoing evaluation of EDIA training and leadership performance.

9.3 Require Department and Program requests for **new faculty** positions to demonstrate how the position will contribute to ongoing efforts to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion.

9.4 Document and communicate a clearer picture of the **demographics** of the current academic staff and faculty complement to better understand which groups are underrepresented and to enable us to track progress over time.

9.5 Review academic policies, practices, procedures, and ceremonies to ensure that faculty and staff from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds, as well as people from diverse faith traditions and people of no faith, are equally **recognized, accommodated, and welcomed** in the StFX community.

10. GOAL: Recognizing that StFX's immersive nature is one of our great strengths and allows us the opportunity to extend learning across campus, foster a vibrant intellectual environment outside of the classroom, in residence spaces, and off-campus.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

10.1 Actively promote the value of participating in **arts and cultural events and academic lectures** by making intentional connections with academic courses and/or offering course incentives.

10.2 Improve student and faculty ability to participate in events by developing a one-stop **events calendar** and, as much as possible, supporting and encouraging both **in-person and online participation**.

10.3 Request Senate initiate a process that will develop a **StFX approach to engaging in conversations on challenging topics in academic spaces**. The approach should recognize and endorse the critical importance of open academic discourse while also offering guidance about how to engage in those discussions in ways that recognize and respect the diverse realities and experiences of our community members.

10.4 Create a strategy to expose students and faculty members to **land-based learning** through engagement with local Indigenous partners.

10.5 Explore the viability of **Living Learning Communities** around student areas of interest as one option to extend learning into residence spaces.

10.6 Increase the use of **residence common areas** as locations for academic lectures, conversations, and informal learning opportunities.

10.7 Encourage initiatives that **extend informal learning and service** opportunities outside of the classroom and into the local community.

10.8 Support **students who are learning remotely or who are not regularly on campus** to feel part of the Xaverian community by being intentional about creating a sense of community in classes; enabling students to access events remotely when possible; and ensuring they have access to the same level of service as those who are regularly on campus.

MOVING FORWARD

By Fall 2023, an implementation plan will be developed to map a path forward for realising the goals presented in this Academic Plan. The implementation plan will identify key metrics and set specific targets, identify groups that are responsible for actions, and include a timeline that recognizes that some of these goals must be enacted first in order to build capacity and resources for other goals. The implementation plan will also align with the actions currently underway to enact the other recent planning exercises at StFX .

The implementation plan will include information about how we will assess and report on our progress so that we can know if we are being successful. Over the life of the plan, annual progress reports will be presented to Senate and to the broader community. In addition to providing updates, these annual reports will allow us to better understand where to place our time, attention, and resources to continue to strengthen our academic priorities at StFX.

	StfX Academic Plan GOALS AT A GLANCE
Goal 1	**Strengthen existing programs**
1.1	Hire tenure/ TT faculty vs LTA
1.2	Ensure transparency in allocating new faculty positions
1.3	Simplify degree structures
1.4	Review CAR process
1.5	Strengthen interdisciplinary programs
1.6	Ensure equity in campus space planning
1.7	Create teaching and lab infrastructure evergreening process
1.8	Develop recruitment plan
1.9	Clarify faculty role in recruitment
1.10	Review Senate committee structure
Goal 2	**Develop new programs**
2.1	Initiate a call for ideas for new programs
2.2	Align new programs with research priorities
2.3	Provide professional staff support for new program development
2.4	Review new program approval process
2.5	Clarify resources that will be invested in departments
2.6	Develop process for trial phase for new programs
2.7	Develop StFX Online as adminstrative hub for revelant new programs
2.8	Explore year round education model
Goal 3	**Address high priority learning themes**
3.1	Theme: academic writing
	Theme: EDIA
	Theme: misinfomration/disinfomration
3.2	Create working group - academic writing
	Create working group - EDIA
	Create working group - misinformation/disinformation
3.3	Develop process for addressing themes in grad programs
3.4	Provide faculty development on priority learning areas
3.5	Create events that support priority learning areas
3.6	Create recruitment communications around priority learning areas
Goal 4	**Enhance first-year experience**
4.1	Embed academic content in student orientation
4.2	Implement academic transition program (XACT)
4.3	Implement transition programing for underrepresented students
4.4	Provide academic supports/ accomodations for international students
4.5	Provide academic supports for underepresented students
4.6	Monitor retention rates
4.7	Encourage departments/programs to welcome and supports first year students
4.8	Develop community of practice instructors of first year courses
4.9	Clarify process for sharing student information between student service and academic areas
4.10	Hone early alert system
4.11	Explore a faculty advisor program

4.12	Require first-year students to meet with academic advisors
Goal 5	**Ensure access to education (EDIA - students)**
5.1	Review scholarship and bursary approach
5.2	Ensure equitable admissions policies
5.3	Provide academic supports for diverse groups of students
5.4	Hone student self-identification
5.5	Explore prior learning assessment policy
5.6	Update IT sytems to ensure access, self serve, degree auditing
5.7	Increase online undergraduate courses
5.8	Encourage OERs
5.9	IT systems and website updates
5.10	Develop strategy for student transfer
5.11	Review policies, processes, term dates, and ceremonies for religious accomodation
Goal 6	**Support transition to work or education**
6.1	Support departments/ Faculties to provide career info
6.2	Career Centre collaborate with departments Faculties on career support
6.3	Supports for students applying to grad school
6.4	Implement degree auditing software & adapt advising model
6.5	Enable course attributes to be flagged in time table (service learning, etc)
6.6	Help students document learning (experiential learning record)
6.7	Coordinate between offices that work on experiential learning
6.8	Create virtual hub for experiential learning
6.9	reduce barriers to participating in expereintial education
6.10	adapt academic policies and practices to enable expereintial education
Goal 7	**Support instructors in curriculum and pedagogy renewal**
7.1	Create Sustainable model for Teaching and Learning Centre - Director
7.2	Hire Educational Developers in TLC
7.3	Review new and existing courses for EDIA (Create framework Framework)
7.4	Provide teaching development opportunites around EDIA
7.5	Provide PD around academic integrity
7.6	Provide PD around high-impact teaching practices
7.7	Adapt Chairs in culturally relevant pedagogy
7.8	Faculty grants for research on scholarship of teaching and learning
7.9	Cooperate with Maple league on Certificate in Teaching and learning
7.10	Faculty development for those who teach online
Goal 8	**Support faculty career development**
8.1	Communicate clear expectations about requirments for promotion and tenure process
8.2	Recognize experience in placement in hirting scale and P&T process
8.3	Develop Mentorship program for pre-tenure faculty
8.4	Expand training opportunities for faculty and staff interested in leadership opportunities
8.5	Incentives for faculty who participate in innovative projects that increase enrolment
8.6	Facilitate team teaching courses
8.7	Support Institutes and Centres to connect faculty and professionals
8.8	Encourage departments to share faculty positions

8.9	Support Advancement to secure endowed chairs and externally funded professorships
Goal 9	**Diversity faculty and staff**
9.1	Hire according to EDIA principles
9.2	Develop a retention strategy for EDIA hires
9.3	Require requests for new faculty to demonstrate how position will contribute to EDIA
9.4	Collect and track demographic information re faculty and staff
9.5	Review academic policies, practices, procedures and ceremonies to ensure they accommodate diversity
Goal 10	**Enhance intellectual environment across campus**
10.1	Promote value of participation in arts, cultural events
10.2	Create events calendar; encouraging in-person and online participation
10.3	Senate develop an approach to engaging in discussions on challenging topics
10.4	Develop strategy/ opportunities to expand land-based learning
10.5	Explore viability of living learning communities
10.6	Use residence common areas for academic events
10.7	Extend informal learning and service into community
10.8	Create community among online or remote students