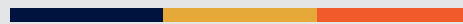
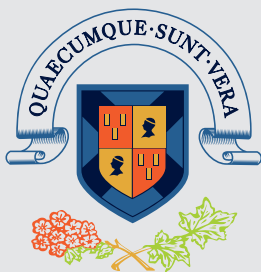




Strategic Plan 2023-2028



Building Our University the Way it is Meant to Be



ST. FRANCIS XAVIER
UNIVERSITY



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 tense. While we strive to decolonize ourselves and our University, 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 of Canada Calls to Action and embodying their spirit in our plans to move forward with our University.

Ms-t wiaqpulti'kl ankukamkewe'l | We are all treaty people



Message from the President and Vice-Chancellor and Chair of the StFX Board of Governors

For decades, St. Francis Xavier University (StFX) has been delivering immersive learning experiences focused on cultivating critical, socially responsible, and engaged citizens. Students, faculty, and staff have collaborated to create a culture of engagement that develops the whole person and builds reciprocal relationships with the communities we serve. Such leadership remains central to our academic mission.

The University Strategic Plan draws from the best of our history and sets us on a progressive path towards the future. It expresses the vision, values, and aspirations of StFX as a diverse community of students, faculty, and staff and it addresses the areas to which we can apply our dynamism and ingenuity more diligently, to build our University the way it is meant to be. It calls for bold action, to experiment, to be innovative, and to pursue new achievements even when they seem beyond our reach.

This Plan informs who we are as a University, where we are headed, and how we will move forward together. The values — academically driven, equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA), community, responsive, sustainability — woven through the fabric of this Plan represent the foundational characteristics that have attracted, and continue to attract, students, faculty, and staff to StFX. As we look to the future, it is important these values continue to inspire and inform our actions and progress.

While we build on what has always defined us, we are also embarking on new directions to support the development of an equitable, inclusive, accessible, and sustainable future. As our key framing document, the University Strategic Plan provides the foundation through which units will develop detailed operational plans to achieve success, including the Academic Plan, Research and Creative



Works Plan, and Student Experience and Opportunity Plan. Critically, this Plan works to unite us as a community, aligning our priorities under a common vision. It is grounded in a commitment to social justice and EDIA, as demonstrated by the work of the President’s Action Committee on Anti-Racism (PACAR) and our Accessibility Plan. From this convergence, we will collectively weave the strands of our efforts across the University together to build our Integrated Planning Framework.

Achieving the mission and vision set out in this Plan is imperative to ensuring the sustainable future of StFX, and our tradition of social justice, social responsibility, and engaged citizenship. The success of the plan depends on all of us playing a role. As President and Vice-Chancellor and Chair of the StFX Board of Governors, we commit to leading initiatives where we can have the greatest impact—we ask you to do the same. Use this plan. Work and grow with it. Expand on it. Be empowered by it and accountable to it. Together, with dedication and commitment, we will continue to build our University the way it is meant to be.

Dr. Andrew Hakin
President and Vice-Chancellor

Dennis Flood
Chair, StFX Board of Governors



Introduction

This Plan has emerged at an extraordinary time in the history of St. Francis Xavier (StFX) University. As the world moves from pandemic to recovery, universities are being asked to take a fresh look at longstanding challenges. StFX University is stepping up to this responsibility with commitment and creativity, to build our University the way it is meant to be.

StFX has a history and tradition of focusing on preparing generations of students to be thoughtful and engaged citizens, equipped with the knowledge, skills, and resilience needed to make positive contributions to the world. We have been responding to and leading change for decades: when we became the first co-educational, Catholic university in North America to grant degrees to women, in 1897; when our students forced social change in the turbulent 1970s; and when we implemented Canada's first Service Learning program, in 1996. The result is a rich academic and research environment and a University that has long provided an unmatched, immersive student experience. Our foundation is solid, and we are not standing still.

There is great potential in our academic community to increase the impact and reach of what we do. Our willingness to take calculated risks and embrace new approaches to solve important problems through research, intellectual engagement, and transformative education are how we will continue to evolve as an institution and contribute to society. We have much to offer as we work to educate and empower students to find their purpose and fulfill their potential. Our deeply experiential approach to education builds from the basic understanding that our undergraduate, graduate, and distance students learn with and from faculty who are engaged in research, scholarship, and innovative approaches to teaching and learning.

We will implement bold new approaches that prepare students to flourish in a changing world, developing enduring skills including critical thinking, adaptable problem-solving, and innovative leadership that they will need to create, to innovate, and to make a difference to society. Drawing on our history, we will continue to inspire and enrich the intellectual, cultural, social, and spiritual growth of our students. These skills will equip our graduates with the capacity to meet the challenges of the future and pursue lives of purpose and connection. From this foundation, we will empower engaged citizens who work together to create social change—locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.



The challenge to lead in building more equitable and inclusive communities is accepted. It is understood that the work we do together toward greater equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility will make StFX a better place and that through this journey we will become stronger. StFX is making progress on these important commitments and there is an energy in our community to do more. Now, as we step into our future, we aspire to create change and to cultivate a sustainable and supportive environment for future generations of learners. We recognize not everyone has had the same opportunities due to systemic, societal oppression and exclusion and we are committed to addressing systemic inequities and removing barriers so that everyone may flourish, especially members of historically and currently excluded groups.

The University Strategic Plan is a forward-thinking document that guides our aspirations for the next five years. This is a moment to channel our energy to think strategically, creatively, and ambitiously about StFX's future and by so doing begin to set in place the sustainable path we deserve and desire. Bringing the vision described with the Strategic Plan — to build our University the way it is meant to be — to life depends upon the talent and commitment of every member of the University community. The plan challenges all to think deeply and strategically about what can be achieved in our own areas, and our roles in translating our values into actions. Collectively, our integrated planning framework weaves the strands of our efforts across the University together to guide the StFX community on an innovative and uniquely StFX path towards our preferred, collective future.



Vision

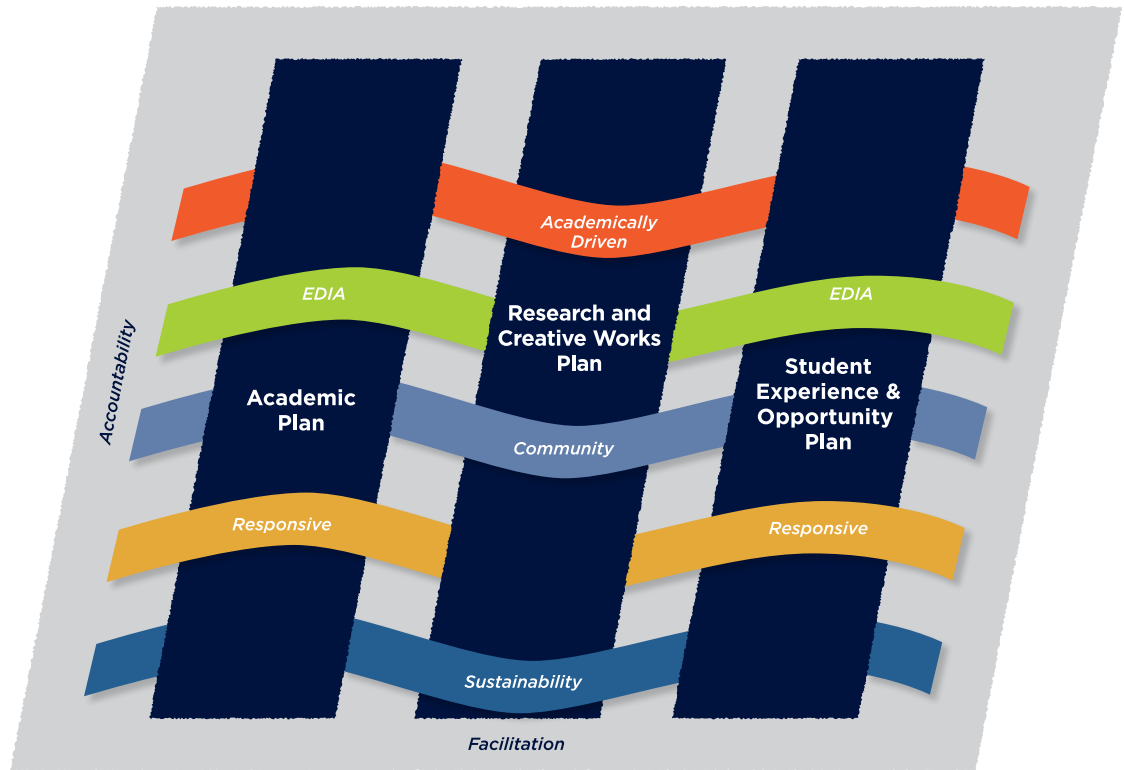
Building on a solid foundation of the work of its founders and history of community and social engagement, StFX University will continue to evolve, setting ever-higher standards to establish itself as Canada's preeminent primarily undergraduate university. Through a carefully designed integrated planning framework StFX will deliver on its vision:

To build our University the way it is meant to be.

Mission

StFX University empowers engaged citizens driven by purpose and connection.

We will fulfill this mission by supporting and enhancing high-quality educational experiences. Our commitment is the creation of a sustainable and supportive learning environment, so we will empower ourselves and each other to embrace new approaches to solving complex challenges and leverage opportunities to make changes that positively impact our community. StFX University prides itself on its strong sense of community and connection and will continue to use this as a source of strength for our future.



A Fabric We Weave Together

Our integrated planning framework is visualized as a woven cloth fabric. The woven structure is inspired by Indigenous symbolism, reminding us of the history of this land and the communities we serve. A weave symbolizes that as a community our collective work is greater than the sum of our individual efforts. Our work together forms a strong and resilient cloth fabric that describes our unique identity.

The vertical warp threads represent our three operational planning documents—the **ACADEMIC PLAN**, the **RESEARCH AND CREATIVE WORKS PLAN**, and the **STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND OPPORTUNITY PLAN**. Taken together, these plans form the strong threads on which our future is woven.

The horizontal weft threads capture our five values—**ACADEMICALLY DRIVEN**, **EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY (EDIA)**, **COMMUNITY**, **RESPONSIVE**, and **SUSTAINABILITY**. These values are woven through all our collective efforts and produce the pattern of the cloth by which we shall be known and identified.

The integrity (or strength) of our well-woven cloth is underpinned by its foundation of **FACILITATION** and **ACCOUNTABILITY**.



The way in which this cloth fabric is created is representative of a collective commitment to engage in the work that must be done to achieve our vision. It emphasizes the interconnected nature of our efforts. Each individual and unique thread brings new strengths to the whole cloth. Each intersection is a reminder of our relationships and impacts on all areas of the university. The weave represents process, not merely the results. By committing to engaging in this work individually and collectively, and integrating our institutional values through our efforts, our strategy emerges as both strong and flexible. The resulting cloth fabric is symbolic of our vision: to build our University the way it is meant to be.



Building from Three Operational Plans

Our collective efforts will be focused and guided by three integrated operational plans.

1 **The Academic Plan: to elevate and prioritize the academic imperative of our University.**

At StFX University, we seek to create opportunities for all those who study at StFX – including undergraduates, graduates, and distance learners—to apply their passion, curiosity, and problem-solving abilities to society’s most significant and urgent challenges. We will further advance and support innovation in teaching and learning, within and beyond the classroom, and across disciplines and faculties, to elevate teaching and equip our students with the knowledge and skills needed to support effective and positive change in the world. By immersing our students in a learner-centred environment rich in curiosity, we will develop active and engaged citizens who think critically and contribute value to their communities.

2 **The Research and Creative Works Plan: to guide and promote the rich culture of ideas and innovation that is an essential component of our University.**

Teaching and learning must be integrated with research activities. As an academic institution, we will enhance the interdependence of research and teaching and integrate research into the experiences of all students. We are committed to the pursuit of research and creative works that continuously inform and evolve our teaching and academic scholarship; the discovery, dissemination, and translation of new knowledge and ideas; and the development of future thought leaders. In undertaking these efforts, StFX will be a leader among Canada’s undergraduate universities for its research and creative contributions to academic scholarship, student experience, community collaboration, and social responsibility.

3 **The Student Experience and Opportunities Plan: to enrich the experiences of our students as they engage with our University.**

The mission of StFX University is not possible unless students are given every opportunity to expand their knowledge, achieve their goals, and experience the personal growth and development needed to have a positive impact in the world. To that end, StFX will build on its model of creating an environment in which all stu-



dents can flourish. Enabling and supporting holistic student success and well-being is at the heart of our programs and services to create an outstanding student culture and experience. To achieve this goal, we will focus on optimizing the first-year experience, strengthening mental health support and services, and leveraging experiential and co-curricular learning as opportunities to enrich students' overall education and contribute to their success.



Our Values

StFX's values are at the core of who we are and will guide our path forward. Our goal is to action and ingrain these values into all facets of University life. The values are not listed by order of significance. In pursuit of our shared mission and vision, we uphold these values and remind each other of their importance.

Academically Driven

Elevating the academic mission of the University to be the engine of our future is critical to our overall success. Our immersive learning environment will reflect best practices in liberal and professional education: we will provide rich learning experiences and opportunities that promote intellectual and personal development. Cultivating a vibrant teaching and learning environment fueled by diverse forms of research and creative activity, innovation, and knowledge mobilization will distinguish our academic mission and drive our undergraduate, graduate, and distance learning programs. By leveraging the strengths of our academic programming and inspiring new generations of learners with the creation of new programs, we will create a culture of academic excellence that parallels the needs of society and the many people whose lives can be enriched through access to high-quality post-secondary education.

EDIA (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility)

As an educational institution, we work proactively to embed practices related to equity, anti-racism, and accessibility in all aspects of our University culture, curriculum, and experience. As a community, we will honour and actively join in the journey of reconciliation and decolonization, including advancing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action. We are committed to uplifting Indigenous voices and presence across all aspects of our University and to creating a welcoming space of belonging for everyone, especially the Mi'kmaq on whose lands we are privileged to be located. We understand that diverse backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives enrich our learning environment, and we are committed to identifying, preventing, and removing barriers to accessibility for persons with disabilities and individuals who experience barriers to equal access within our living, learning, and working environment. Through individual and collective action, we will promote anti-racism in all its forms, including advancing our commitment to the Scarborough Charter. We will cultivate a sense of belonging that supports the dignity, safety, and well-being of all faculty, staff, and students from historically and currently excluded groups.



Community

Connecting with community and being engaged locally, nationally, and internationally is part of StFX's foundation. We recognize that we are part of a collective and that we have responsibilities to and for each other. Through immersive learning experiences and social engagement, by acting as good neighbours, and building students' capacity to practice Xaverian values such as respect, resilience, belonging, and courage, we will highlight and demonstrate the responsibilities associated with serving our communities. By drawing on our values and traditions and continuing to cultivate reciprocal relationships with our partners—including Indigenous, government, community, industry, and alumni we will enhance our reach as an institution and both welcome and promote new initiatives that nourish the advancement of all the communities to which we are connected.

Responsive

Society's need for a better future has never been so great and StFX will respond to answer this need through the graduates of our undergraduate, graduate, and distance learning programs and the research and creative work that we conduct for the benefit of all. We commit to working with our partners to ensure we remain responsive, relevant, and accountable to our communities in pursuit of common goals. By setting priorities and embracing the strength realized through collective effort we will take control of our future and uncouple the weights that serve to slow progress on our preferred path.

Sustainability

As stewards of the University we will move with purpose to enhance the social, cultural, environmental, and economic sustainability of our operations and practices. What we do together will resonate tomorrow, and we are deeply aware of our responsibilities to the future. As a whole campus, we will engage in the important conversations about mental health and wellbeing, and each do our part in creating a campus environment in which all students, faculty, and staff can flourish. We will make efficient use of our fiscal resources, support transparent decision-making, and promote continuous improvement in all that we provide.



Facilitation and Accountability

Facilitation: making our operational plans work for the benefit of all.

In advancing the operational plans, and therefore, the mission of the University, StFX will ensure that our financial planning and allocations identify operational priorities through transparent and accountable budgeting processes. By promoting enhanced transparency in operational planning there will be a concerted effort to remove siloed activity so that the full strength of the University and its richly talented people can be brought to bear on the delivery of strategically important and desired outcomes.

To provide the best possible support for our faculty, staff, and students, it is vital that we have highly efficient administrative processes in place across all areas of the University. We will seek to modernize our policies and procedures, and enhance our services, by applying evidence-informed practices. We will also continue to advance our focus on sustainability, environmental stewardship, and accessibility across our campus operations. True to our values, we are committed to implementing policies, processes, practices, and procedures that reflect and respect EDIA. We will work hard to create a living and working environment that supports all faculty, staff, and students in their wellbeing, as well as their professional and personal development.

The capital needs of the University will be prioritized using a framework of operational imperatives, sustainability, and accessibility that flow from our operational plans. We will work to become a data-driven institution capable of asking new questions about how we perform, the answers to which will differentiate our performance, our practices, and our University.

Accountability: we will have the strength to ask questions about our progress.

StFX University is committed to effective accountability and transparency. It is recognized that an understanding of how we are doing as evidenced through widely shared metrics is vital for sound planning, the strategic management of our resources, and the building of trust.

Our progress will be measured by the effects that we have on our communities, including our faculty, staff, and students. Success will also be measured by our ability to advance our institutional priorities and values. The metrics we use will



provide high level indicators of University activity and performance. They are tuned to the implementation of our values in all that we do. These indicators will be continuously updated and presented annually to all stakeholders including the Board of Governors, University governance bodies, and members of the wider community. Such transparency is vital to the success of our strategic plan and will produce ongoing guidance to the delivery of our vision: to build our University the way it is meant to be.



Appendix: Strategic Plan Metrics

We will be accountable for delivering on the strategic plan by ensuring regular reporting of performance measures. Measures will track progress related to the mission, vision, and values of the strategic plan. There are also specific actions and related measures in the Academic Plan, Research and Creative Works Plan, and Student Experience and Opportunity Plan, which will track progress at a more detailed level.

Moving forward, we recognize the need to develop a more comprehensive approach to institutional data collection and analysis. The following metrics will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Board of Governors and refined in order to accurately describe our progress. They will also be supplemented by qualitative and quantitative data collection at the unit/department level to better understand the impact of our work and enable us tell our story.

(a) Academically Driven

- Student retention (1st to 2nd year retention rate) and academic averages
- Admissions profile (undergraduate & graduate)
- Total program enrolment (by faculty)
- Number of new academic credentials introduced and associated enrolment
- Satisfaction with quality of education and teaching

(b) Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility

- International student enrolment/retention—visa students, full-time, part-time
- Indigenous student enrolment/retention—full-time, part-time
- African Nova Scotian student enrolment/retention—full-time, part-time
- Student Satisfaction (e.g., Incoming Student Survey, focus groups)

(c) Community

- Total enrolment
- Proportion of graduate enrolment
- Total number of alumni and geographic distribution
- Proportion of first-year/senior students participating in High Impact Practices*
- Number of Employees and Employee Satisfaction

**High-Impact Practices (HIPs) include participation in service learning, a learning community, research with faculty, internship or field experience, study abroad, and culminating senior experiences.*



(d) Responsive

- Annual number of graduates
- Value of research grants received (federal, provincial & other)
- Local and provincial economic impact
- Investments in student services, including investment in services that support intellectual, cultural, social, and spiritual growth of students
- Total value of scholarships, bursaries and prizes

(e) Sustainability

- University long term debt
- Total annual (\$) giving to the University
- Proportion of funds from annual giving allocated to institutional areas (ex. history and culture, anti-racism, accessibility, wellness and well-being etc.)
- Endowment fund balance
- Total carbon emissions
- Campus energy use and costs