

THE WAY UNIVERSITY IS MEANT TO BE.

STRATEGIC PLAN **2017-22**



ST. FRANCIS XAVIER
UNIVERSITY



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The Board of Governors of StFX and I are confident that the following strategic plan will steward the university through the next five years with purpose, vision, and vigor. It reflects the leadership that we trust to anticipate challenges, seek opportunities for growth, and ensure the long-term health of the institution.

This plan captures the essence of StFX: that it is a complex system of interconnected pieces, all moving in deliberate concert with one another to create an engaged community unlike any other in Canada. This plan looks forward without neglecting our past, embracing the essence of our history and harnessing the power of our people. Like StFX itself, it is bold, declarative, and filled with pride and ambition.

We can't wait to see what the next five years will bring.

Mark Wallace, Chair, St. Francis Xavier University Board of Governors









This strategic plan represents countless hours of careful, thoughtful effort from myriad members of our StFX community – all of whom worked so diligently to produce a guide that will lead us through the next five years. In traditional StFX style, it has been a true, collective effort.

The importance of this plan cannot be overstated. Like most universities, StFX anticipates new challenges in the years ahead. Continued reduced government support, changing demographics, increased competition, and disruptive technologies are just some of the realities facing us in higher education today. StFX won't simply sit back and allow this environment to dictate our path.

This plan provides a roadmap that will steer our decision-making, remind us of our priorities, and help focus our resources as we grow and lead. More, it reminds us that we are united in our common goals, joined together with a single purpose: to ensure that StFX really is the way university is meant to be.

Our students are the backbone of this plan; they are our *raison d'être* and our most precious resource. For more than 163 years, our students have inspired us to be better tomorrow than we were yesterday. This plan heralds a bright future for all of us at StFX.

Hail and Health,

Kent MacDonald, President and Vice Chancellor, St. Francis Xavier University



The academic mission forms the core of every university, but this plan elucidates what differentiates StFX from other universities: our deeply experiential approach to education ensures that our students learn with and from faculty who are engaged in lifelong scholarship. Within the classroom, students benefit from dynamic faculty who embrace the direct correlation between research and effective teaching. Beyond the classroom, this plan recognizes the innumerable ways in which our students become educated – through service learning, as leaders and entrepreneurs, and as members of a community that is made rich through its diversity.

Our faculty members are supported in their academic endeavours – whether they are interdisciplinary or traditionally focused. The vitality of StFX rests in large part upon their work, and we are committed to broadening the resources that will facilitate their best scholarship.

This plan both recognizes our strengths and enumerates the means through which we can reach our goals. I look forward to working with faculty, staff, and students – and realizing the potential in all of us.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "K. B. Wamsley".

Kevin Wamsley, Academic Vice President & Provost, St. Francis Xavier University





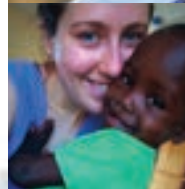
WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE TRUE

StFX has been at the cutting edge of progress, time and time again: 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 Coady International Institute, established in 1959, has brought the influence of StFX to thousands of participants in more than 130 countries. Myriad accomplished graduates – including Rhodes Scholars, Prime Ministers, and social innovators – are emblematic of StFX's institutional commitment to service and excellence.

The Antigonish Movement began with dreams, but determination and collaboration bridged the chasm between dream and reality. Father Jimmy Tompkins, who believed in bringing the university into “close and vital touch” with the community, imagined a symbiotic relationship of knowledge accrual and dissemination. His cousin, Father Moses Coady, the first head of StFX's Extension Department, traveled across North America in search of a model institution, but concluded that Maritime people would have to ‘work out their own salvation’. The twin focuses of the Extension Department's mission – study clubs and credit unions – created strong networks of people who collaborated with the university to share knowledge and gain independence. The Antigonish Movement garnered wide acclaim, and the work of the Coady International Institute continues to highlight the university's local and global reputation as a leader in asset-based community development.

On the StFX campus, students do not simply get an education; rather, in devoting themselves to academic excellence, their community, and each other, they create a future. In 2016, the university is a careful steward of its resources – much as it was in 1853, when it germinated from the seeds of service. Our search for “whatsoever things are true” reveals the deepest truth of all: that in serving others, we are richly rewarded – with knowledge, goodness, and strong communities.





CREATING THE PLAN

1. An 18-member Strategic Planning Committee comprised of faculty, staff, and students began meeting in the Fall of 2014.
2. In the early Spring of 2015, the Committee members led a campus-wide consultation using the appreciative inquiry approach, including 14 consultation sessions. Approximately 200 community members participated.
3. The committee composed a Draft Mission, Values, and Vision document based on feedback from the appreciative inquiry, which was circulated to the community for feedback.
4. Between November of 2015 and January of 2016, the Strategic Planning Committee developed a Vision Framework, which was brought to various groups across campus and the Board of Governors for consultation.
5. In April and May of 2016, the President's Council drew on the Vision Framework to identify and prioritize Goals and Objectives.



HERE & NOW

The history of Nova Scotia is peppered in equal parts by stories of struggle and narratives of progress. We are pioneers, by birth and by circumstance and by necessity. The call to action in the decisive Report of the Nova Scotia Commission on Building Our New Economy is clear: we must be innovative, empowered, and supported. We must be educated.

We cannot ignore the challenges we face: our population is aging and shrinking, and the economy is largely stagnant. The cost of higher education is escalating, and the needs of our students are ever-changing. Universities must now support campus communities that prepare students for global citizenship; embrace technology that is potentially disruptive; and ensure the long-term viability of the institution.

And yet – this is no new situation. The particulars of our obstacles vary, but the essence does not: StFX will not be defined by our reaction to unforeseen roadblocks; rather, we will be known for our ability to prepare ourselves and our students for a tomorrow that won't resemble today. We are privileged to be surrounded by deeply engaged students who fight for equity in our washrooms and our classrooms, who imagine and execute a new conference in actuarial science, and who proudly wear the X-ring for the rest of their lives as a symbol of their fealty to this place and each other. StFX professors are passionate: they conduct research that advances their fields and enhances their teaching; they lead students on environmental expeditions to Alaska and Saskatchewan; and they sit in offices with open doors, always ready to engage and support. Our energetic staff and community members are resilient, generous, and wholly devoted to this institution: they bake cookies for students in residence; hold groundbreaking seminars on mental health; and cheer for students from the bleachers and the sidelines.

The following plan draws on the power of our people. It highlights the best of our traditions and the things we hold most dear – and it addresses the areas to which we can apply our trademark dynamism and ingenuity more diligently. This is the way university is meant to be.



THE PLAN

StFX inspires and drives the intellectual, physical, social, and spiritual growth of our students. Drawing on the work of our founders and our history of community and social engagement, we foster rigorous learning, engaged citizenship, and dynamic leadership.

This is the vision for our future:

From the finest traditions of liberal education, we are recognized as distinguished scholars, as evidenced by exceptional teaching, learning, and research. We cultivate a vibrant community of academically-focused and socially-engaged students, faculty, and staff from across the country and around the world. We are welcoming, inclusive, and diverse, deeply committed to social justice and social responsibility.

Quite simply, we make a difference in the world.

At StFX, we are committed to Excellence, Equity, Service, and Dignity.

All challenges, responsibilities, and opportunities are approached with these values: our goals are informed by our pursuit of excellence; we are strong and successful because of our diversity and commitment to equity; we are enriched through service to our campus and broader communities; and we conduct ourselves with dignity – reflective of integrity, respect, and honour.

Each individual goal of the university's components is in support of larger institutional goals:

- Smart enrolment targets supported by a strategic enrolment plan
- Balanced operating budget
- Healthy endowment
- Improved retention and persistence rates
- Increased enrolment by under-represented students, including international students.
- High student satisfaction
- High faculty & staff engagement





These are the pillars of our future:

Academic Excellence

Student learning is at the core of our mission. Our immersive learning environment reflects the principles of liberal education: we provide rich learning experiences and opportunities that promote intellectual and personal development. Faculty research is integral to and informs teaching and the learning experience. Inspired by dedicated faculty and staff, our students develop into analytical, creative, and critical thinkers – global citizens who adapt and engage in an ever-changing world with integrity and curiosity.

Student Experience & Opportunity

Our unique campus environment, rooted in strong tradition, is centred around social engagement and fosters a sense of purpose, community, and active citizenship. Immersion in the StFX culture creates leaders who have unparalleled access to and support from passionate faculty and staff. After graduation, our students become part of a strong network of inspired alumni bound by their Xaverian experiences.

Social Responsibility & Innovation

We, as local and global leaders, collaborate meaningfully and use skill and determination to foster active citizenship and enact positive change. Service is central to our collective identity; in serving others, we continue the very best traditions of the university. We draw upon our substantial human resources to bridge theory with social, cultural, and economic innovation, enterprise, and practice.

Equity & Inclusion

We are a welcoming community, reflective of the diversity of the modern world and strengthened by our differences. We respect and support the needs and aspirations of our students, faculty, and staff by being creative, adaptable, and inclusive in our practice and policies. We provide opportunities to members of all communities to participate, engage, and belong.

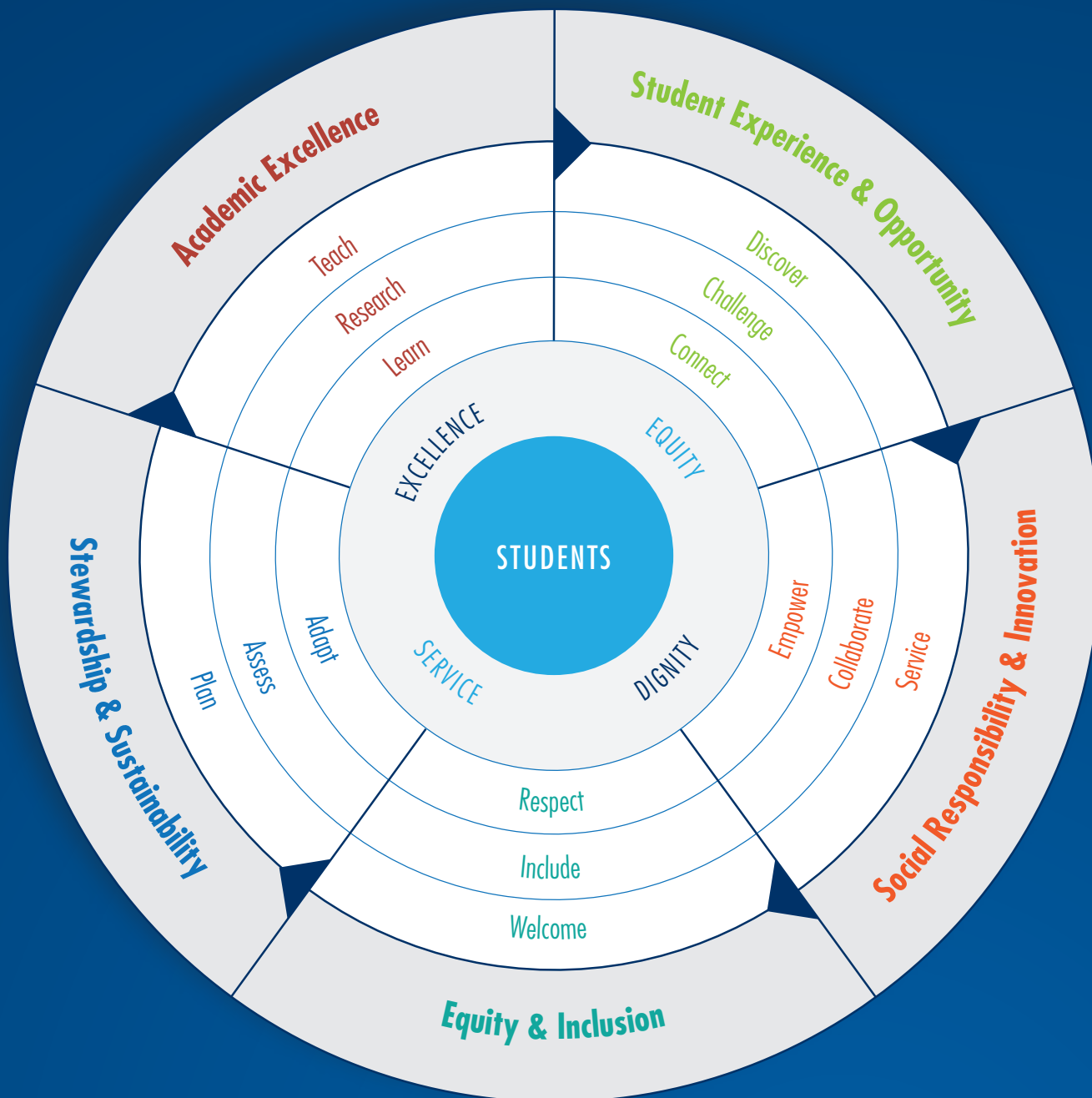
Stewardship & Sustainability

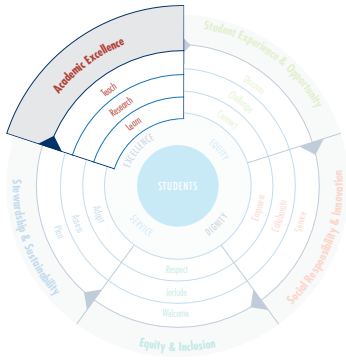
We use sound assessment and careful planning to allocate resources to best meet the broader goals of the university. We are purposeful stewards of our resources, considerate of our impact on the environment and our long-term resilience. And, we harness the power of our people: we draw on their knowledge and energy, and support their growth.



STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

2017-22





Goal 1

Deliver high-quality, innovative, and relevant academic programs that meet the needs and aspirations of a diverse student body.

Academic Excellence

Student learning is at the core of our mission. Our immersive learning environment reflects the principles of liberal education: we provide rich learning experiences and opportunities that promote intellectual and personal development. Faculty research is integral to and informs teaching and the learning experience. Inspired by dedicated faculty and staff, our students develop into analytical, creative, and critical thinkers – global citizens who adapt and engage in an ever-changing world with integrity and curiosity.

Objectives

Develop new academic programs to attract additional students to StFX, including programs in health and public policy and governance.

Ensure regular, ongoing review of existing programs through Committee on Academic Review and subsequent annual reporting.

Improve and increase opportunities for collaboration on academic program delivery across the institution, including offering select Coady and/or Extension courses for credit in undergraduate degree programs.

Embed experiential learning opportunities, including service learning, across a wider range of departments and programs.

Increase the number and selection of online or blended delivery courses.

Goal 2

Enrich our culture of teaching excellence in an inclusive learning environment.

Objectives

Create a Centre for Teaching and Learning with a mandate to promote excellence and innovation in teaching practice.

Offer an increased range of professional development opportunities on teaching practice in higher education.

Develop a peer-led teaching mentorship program for faculty members.

Provide specific supports for faculty members to support the needs of a diverse range of students.



Goal 3

Advance a culture of faculty success and student involvement in research.

Objectives

Develop and launch several major research institutes and related research centres in priority areas such as public policy and government; climate and environment; health; and community-based research.

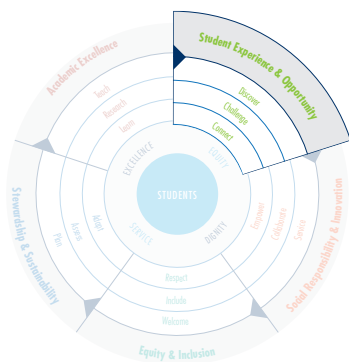
Increase the number and diversity of undergraduate students involved in research through expansion of undergraduate student research awards and the creation of a Summer Research Institute.

Establish a new program of graduate student research scholarships.

Revise and increase funding available through the UCR to strengthen faculty opportunities to seek external research funding, and develop new mechanisms to reward exceptionally productive researchers with additional time for research.

Increase faculty and student research recognition by establishing an annual report on research, holding an annual recognition event, establishing a new mechanism to advance faculty nominations for external research awards, and developing a new research website.





Goal 1

Support the academic success, persistence, and timely graduation of all students.

Student Experience & Opportunity

Our unique campus environment, rooted in strong tradition, is centred around social engagement and fosters a sense of purpose, community, and active citizenship. Immersion in the StFX culture creates leaders who have unparalleled access to and support from passionate faculty and staff. After graduation, our students become part of a strong network of inspired alumni bound by their Xaverian experiences.

Objectives

Collaborate across Academic and Student Life areas to create a Centre for Student Success that consolidates a diverse range of student supports in one location.

Implement a holistic First-Year Experience program to help new students develop skills to support a successful transition from high school.

Create events and programs that forge connections between academic and campus life and encourage faculty and students to connect outside of the classroom.

Increase programming and supports that will enable the success of under-represented groups of students.

Enhance the Accessible Learning Centre to increase capacity and supports for students with disabilities.

Goal 2

Optimize student health and wellness through relevant and innovative programming and services, and by promoting a student culture grounded in pride in learning, pride of place, and personal responsibility.

Objectives

Enhance the culture of student safety and personal responsibility through an increase in best practice programs and workshops that promote healthy behaviour.

Increase the number and range of programs and events that promote mental health awareness.

Increase the number and diversity of club sports and other recreational activities, including a co-curricular outdoor recreation program.



Goal 3

Engage our students in transformative experiences to support their development as effective leaders, ambassadors, and global citizens.

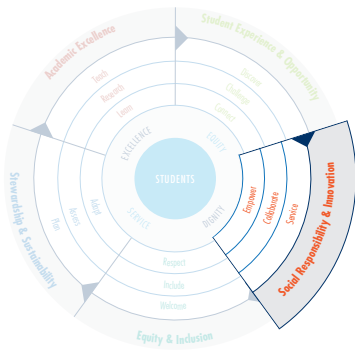
Objectives

Collaborate across the University to enhance and integrate leadership development opportunities for our students.

Create a leadership development program for first year students.

Expand opportunities, including international opportunities, for students to interact with diverse people, cultures, ideas, and perspectives.





Goal 1

Re-imagine and operationalize StFX's commitment to social justice, social responsibility, and active 'local to global' citizenship.

Social Responsibility & Innovation

We, as local and global leaders, collaborate meaningfully and use skill and determination to foster active citizenship and enact positive change. Service is central to our collective identity; in serving others, we continue the very best traditions of the University. We draw upon our substantial human resources to bridge theory with social, cultural, and economic innovation, enterprise, and practice.

Objectives

Articulate a reinvigorated and renewed Antigonish Movement that includes a plan for its implementation across StFX and the communities we serve.

Integrate concepts of social justice, social responsibility, and active 'local to global' citizenship into undergraduate and graduate courses and programs.

Re-design StFX orientation programs to include content on StFX's commitment to social justice, social responsibility, and active local to global citizenship.

Goal 2

Engender an integrated 'one StFX' approach to social responsibility and innovation.

Objectives

Develop a University-wide concept and framework of social responsibility.

Create a mechanism to align StFX local to global initiatives and develop a plan to guide implementation.

Identify strategic partnerships with local to global community-based players to anchor and build social engagement and innovation opportunities.

Goal 3

Foster theory, culture, and practice of entrepreneurship and social innovation across the Xaverian community and beyond.

Objectives

Develop a University-wide concept and framework of entrepreneurship and social innovation, and create a plan for its implementation and monitoring.

Support research initiatives that clearly articulate social, cultural, and environmental goals and priorities central to entrepreneurial and innovation initiatives.

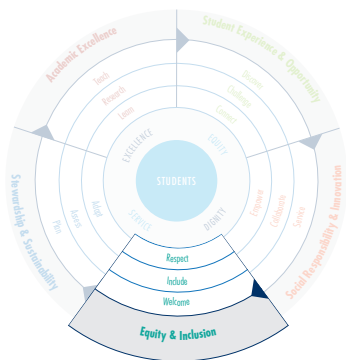
Collaborate across the institution to create an interdisciplinary program (Undergraduate and/or Masters) on entrepreneurship, social innovation, and community resilience.

Create incentives for faculty and staff to be engaged in community-based entrepreneurship, enterprise development, and social innovation initiatives.

Develop a StFX entrepreneurship and social innovation alumni strategy grounded in our social responsibility framework.







Goal 1

Create and sustain a campus climate in which all campus community members feel welcomed, supported, included, and valued by the University and each other.

Equity & Inclusion

We are a welcoming community, reflective of the diversity of the modern world and strengthened by our differences. We respect and support the needs and aspirations of our students, faculty, and staff by being creative, adaptable, and inclusive in our practice and policies. We provide opportunities to members of all communities to participate, engage, and belong.

Objectives

Create a shared definition of equity that can be integrated into all aspects of University operations and program delivery.

Review and revise existing policies and practices to promote respectful, equitable interactions within the University community.

Create clearly identified and ongoing supports for the integration of equitable pedagogical practice across all disciplines.

Promote research on equity, inclusion, and diversity, making contributions to scholarship as well as the campus and society.

Goal 2

Create a critical mass of talented students, faculty, and staff that reflects the wider Canadian and global community.

Objectives

Develop student recruitment strategies specific to individual communities.

Review and revise student entrance and assessment criteria to reflect principles of equity and inclusion.

Review and revise faculty/staff recruitment and assessment processes to reflect principles of equity and inclusion.

Goal 3

Enhance academic support services to give all students the opportunity to achieve their potential.

Objectives

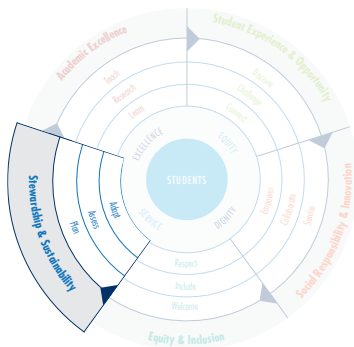
Create Centre for Student Success to assist all students to achieve their potential.

Expand services for International students, including English as an additional language programming.

Expand services for under-represented students, including African Nova Scotian, Indigenous, and students with low income.







Goal 1

Develop the capacity for transparent, evidence-based decision making to inform all areas of University operations.

Objectives

Implement a University-wide financial performance metrics data collection, verification, and reporting system.

Identify, collect, and share data from each area of the University to inform decision making. This may include data related to demand, performance/quality, environmental impact, risk management, and productivity.

Develop a merit system for departments or individuals who exceed targets or lead in the University.

Goal 2

Align the use, construction, renovation and/or enhancement of physical and digital space with the University's strategic priorities, while adhering to principles of smart growth and sustainability.

Objectives

Develop a Campus Master Plan that reflects the strategic vision for the future physical and digital development of campus.

Develop a Campus Sustainability Plan that explores and exemplifies economic, environmental, and social sustainability principles.

Develop an Information Technology Strategy that promotes innovative practices and enhances self-service capabilities.

Goal 3

Increase operating revenues and contain costs to achieve a balanced operating budget.

Objectives

Develop a strategic enrolment management plan.

Develop a comprehensive strategy aimed at improving student retention rates.

Explore and develop alternative revenue streams.

Increase donor support for endowment and scholarships.

Review operating costs on an ongoing basis to improve efficiency and reduce redundancy.



Goal 4

Enhance the sense of pride and belonging amongst faculty and staff by investing in professional development opportunities and by promoting a campus culture that is transparent and trusting.

Objectives

Complete a skills inventory within each unit to identify needs, gaps, and opportunities for investment in staff and faculty development.

Develop a clear, consistent, and coherent internal communications plan.

Develop and offer a range of professional development workshops and events.





ST. FRANCIS XAVIER UNIVERSITY

The StFX Strategic Plan was prepared with the input of many across campus. A very special thank you to the working committee members below:

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