

**St. Thomas University**  
**Strategic Plan 2013-2018 | Progress and Summary Report**

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## **Strategic Priority 1 | Excellence in Undergraduate Liberal Arts Education**

*St. Thomas University offers its students a broad and rigorous undergraduate liberal arts education. Achieving excellence in this core activity will be fundamental to fulfilling our vision. It will enhance our distinctiveness, provide a starting point for societal engagement, foster a meaningful and memorable student experience, and encourage a more vibrant learning community.*

### **| Goal – Fostering a culture of excellence in teaching, research, and service**

#### **NSSE Results for STU**

The National Survey of Student Engagement is the pre-eminent measure of university teaching and student engagement. In its most recent survey, 130,000 students from 72 Canadian schools were surveyed. Not only was STU the highest rated university in New Brunswick for “entire educational experience”, it performed exceptionally well on national comparisons. According to NSSE, STU was:

- third in Canada for reflective and integrative learning or how students make connections between their studies, experiences, the wider world, and social issues
- fourth in Canada for higher-order learning including how often coursework emphasizes skills like applying facts, analyzing ideas, and forming new ideas
- fifth in Canada for learning strategies
- among the top ten in Canada for providing a supportive student environment and student-faculty interaction

#### **Supporting Students to Completion**

STU is a leader in supporting students to complete their degree. Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission data places STU third among the 15 universities in Maritime Canada for the percentage of students completing their degree in four years.

#### **New Research Chairs**

STU has added a new research chair in Community Health and Aging, Dr. Albert Banerjee, and a Canada Research Chair in Global and International Studies, Dr. Matthew Hayes. Both chair-holders are outstanding researchers with exceptional records for research grant funding and scholarly publications. A search for a chair in Social Implications of Legalization of Cannabis is underway.

#### **MPHEC External Academic Reviews for Quality Assurance**

External reviews of academic programs are part of the accreditation and quality assurance processes (external reviewer site visits and reports, Senate review, departmental responses) conducted in conjunction with the MPHEC. During this period, the following departments were reviewed: Science and Technology Studies, Romance Languages, Anthropology, Political Science, Sociology, Education, Human Rights, Communications and Public Policy, Economics, Environment and Society, History, Philosophy, English, Great Books, and Psychology. This initiative ensures quality academic programming aligned with best practices in post-secondary education.

#### **Dean’s List Excellence**

St. Thomas celebrates the academic achievements of its students with its annual Dean’s List Dinner. In 2018, approximately 17% of the student body achieved the minimum required grade-point average of 3.7 (A-) or higher on 30 credit hours. This percentage has shown a steady increase and is currently above the norm for Canadian universities.

### **| Goal – Challenging students to achieve the highest standards of academic excellence and providing them with appropriate academic support**

#### **Student Services Programs**

Students Services staffing has expanded during the five-year period of this *Plan* and now offers significant support for students through The Writing Centre, Peer Tutoring Program, Learning Strategy Services, and Accessibility Services. A new section of the university website dedicated to learning strategy services offers guidance for note-taking, studying, time

management, and test-taking, and those interested can schedule an appointment with the learning strategist. The Writing Centre is available for students who need assistance with any aspect of the writing process, while and Accessibility Services offers accommodations for students with disabilities.

### **Academic Advising Program**

Academic Advisors help current students with selecting a major, fulfilling degree requirements, and understanding post-degree program options. They also offer assistance to incoming first-year students in registering for courses, and work with exchange students to ensure they are meeting the requirements of their home institution.

## **| Goal – Promoting traditional academic disciplines and supporting select high-quality interdisciplinary programs**

### **New Program in Law, Politics, and Society**

A new Interdisciplinary Major and Minor in Law, Society, and Politics was launched in 2017-18. Housed within Political Science, the program allows students to engage in an interdisciplinary exploration of the relationship between law, political life, and society. Students examine the nature of law and its influence on Canadians and their polity, and explore how laws are made and changed, and what forces shape them.

### **New Honours in Human Rights**

A new Honours Program in Human Rights is one of few such programs in all of Canada, and the only one in Atlantic Canada that allows undergraduate students to obtain an Honours or Major in the field of human rights. Students study the national and international context of human rights and undertake individualized research projects on specific topics in upper years of study. The program provides knowledge of the philosophy, legal instruments, and national and international institutions that are the foundation for human rights.

### **Masters in Social Work / Bachelor of Social Work Proposals with MPHEC**

STU is proposing to add a Masters of Social Work and to restructure its Bachelor of Social Work. The proposal has received Senate and Board of Governors approval and has been submitted to the Maritimes Provinces Higher Education Commission for approval. This is a necessary extension of the current programming as a masters is increasingly required for entry into the profession in many provinces.

### **Recruiting Publications**

Recruiting publications which reach national and international audiences—the *Domestic/International Viewbooks*, *Program Brochures*, ancillary materials, and *Acceptance Packages*—have been redesigned and expanded with more information on academic departments, student services, and student and alumni successes. Two of these publications were selected from among 5,000 submissions from eight countries to receive Summit International Awards for excellence in marketing communications.

## **| Goal – Creating opportunities for experiential, applied learning, and co-curricular activities**

### **New Certificate in Experiential Learning and Community Engagement**

Students have the opportunity to complete a Certificate in Experiential Learning and Community Engagement concurrently with their Bachelor of Arts. The certificate provides tangible evidence of the hands-on learning and community service completed during their studies and is a resource that can be used to demonstrate community involvement to potential employers and graduate schools. To earn the Certificate, students must have nine credit hours of course-based experiential learning and 30 volunteer hours of community engaged service learning.

### **New Office of Experiential Learning / Internships**

The new Office of Experiential Learning is committed to providing students with opportunities to apply their knowledge and conceptual understanding to real-world problems and to bring theory to life. The office has made connections with local employers and facilitated 40 paid internships for students during 2018-2019 with 30 non-governmental organizations and small to medium sized businesses. Students are also encouraged to submit their own internship proposal if current offerings don't match their interests or field of study.

### ***Nelson Mandela World Human Rights Moot Court Champions***

For the past two years, STU has been represented at the Nelson Mandela World Human Rights Moot Court Competition in Geneva, Switzerland. Students Navy Vezina and Abbie LeBlanc became the first-ever Canadian team to win the Nelson Mandela World Human Rights Moot Court at the University's first appearance in 2017. Emily Williams and Camille Xavier came second overall at the event in 2018. Participating teams need to qualify for the event by earning a top-ten ranking in a brief-writing exercise. Both years, STU qualified in the top ten for the Western European and Others region to earn a spot at this international event.

### ***American Moot Court Top Five***

In the five years since its inception, STU Moot Court teams have made four appearances at the American Moot Court Association National Championship and have consistently placed among the top speakers in competition—STU students have been recognized 28 times as top oralists at regional events and earned six top speaker awards at nationals. This year, the team set a program record, finishing in fifth place at the national event and winning two regional competitions.

### ***Moot Court - Osgoode National Canadian Champions***

Moot Court students Kelly Brennan and Brianna Workman were crowned National Undergraduate Moot Court Champions after winning the Osgoode Cup in Toronto. They faced teams from the University of Toronto, York University, Carleton University, and Humber-Guelph at the event. Brianna Workman was also recognized as one of the top speakers at the event, finishing among the top 10 of the 218 attendees.

### ***Student Research and Ideas Fair***

The Student Research and Ideas Fair provides students with the opportunity to present their research in an environment similar to an academic conference. All topics of research are eligible for inclusion and different forms of presentation—paper reading, poster display, video broadcast—are encouraged. Student presentations are followed by a question and answer period that allows for discussion and debate with attendees and professor moderators. The Fair has run for 16 years and this year 55 students presented their research.

### ***Expansion of Travel-Study / International Exchange Opportunities***

Study abroad opportunities allow students to experience another culture and see more of the world as they earn academic credit toward their degree. International Exchanges are now offered in 12 countries including Australia, Brazil, England, China, Spain, and Japan. Recent travel-studies have taken students and professors to New York, Ireland, and Italy.

## **| Goal – Enhancing our offerings in the fine and performing arts, as well as in the natural sciences and mathematics**

### ***Musical Theatre / Drama Theatre Support and Offerings***

A limited-term faculty appointment in the Department of Fine Arts has resulted in more courses in musical theatre and more opportunities to perform in productions that are open to all students, regardless of their academic major.

## **| Goal – Increasing our FT faculty complement**

### ***Faculty Renewal***

The number of full-time faculty positions has varied only slightly over time in light of retirements and hiring decisions. The end of mandatory retirement has had an impact, as almost 15% of full-time faculty are age 65 and over. Over the course of this *Plan*, the goal of increasing full-time faculty evolved to one of realigning the number of full-time faculty positions with current and predicted student enrolment levels, while continuing to ensure program integrity and academic quality. The realignment is being achieved through implementation of a Voluntary Retirement Incentive/Phased-in Retirement Incentive with 13 of 25 eligible faculty members taking advantage of the programs. Through this process of realignment, academic staffing decisions in relation to vacant positions were considered in light of academic needs and trends in student enrolment. Over the period of the *Plan*, 12 tenure-track hires were made in four departments.

### ***Deans of Humanities and Social Sciences***

Following a national search, Dr. André Loiselle was appointed Dean of Humanities. Loiselle was a professor in the School for Studies in Art and Culture at Carleton University, and has administrative experience serving at Carleton University as Assistant Vice-President (Academic), Associate Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs, Director of the School of Canadian Studies, and Acting Director of the School for Studies in Art and Culture. Dr. Susan Machum, the Dean of Social Sciences, was a professor in the Department of Sociology and a Canada Research Chair in Rural Social Justice.

## **| Goal – Increasing our national and international profile**

### ***McKenna Centre for Communications and Public Policy***

The Frank McKenna Centre for Communications and Public Policy is helping the University become a leader in educating students in communications and public policy. A \$1 million pledge from Frank and Julie McKenna has created an endowment to enrich the student educational experience. Activities include a distinguished speaker series, symposiums and policy forums, and student exposure to public policy activities.

### ***National Conference on Indigenization of the Academy***

STU hosted a Conference Towards Reconciliation, a three-day event that included keynote speakers, panel discussions, breakout sessions, and a celebration of Indigenous culture. The conference was organized by the Senate Committee on Indigenization and was part of a series of events to address how STU can respond effectively to the Calls to Action in the report of by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

### ***National CIS Women's Hockey Championship***

The Canadian Interuniversity Sport Women's Hockey National Championships hosted by STU in 2013 attracted five teams and 7,000 spectators. The webcast games reached 3,000 viewers and the championship game, broadcast by Rogers Sportsnet, reached 35,000 viewers. Since then, STU has competed in the national women's hockey championship on two more occasions.

### ***Harvard Model United Nations***

Students in Political Science's Model United Nations class gain valuable experience in public speaking and negotiation every year at the Harvard National Model United Nations. They join more than 3,000 delegates from around the world to participate in various committees to work toward the resolution of global issues. Founded in 1955, the Harvard Model UN is the largest, oldest, and most prestigious conference of its kind; STU has sent a team to the competition for over two decades.

### ***Campus Recognition***

St. Thomas University has been recognized as one of Canada's most beautiful campuses by the *Huffington Post*. A state-of-the-art interactive campus map was launched and has reached tens of thousands of visitors.

### ***New Website / Integrated Digital Campaign / Social Media Campaigns***

With a refreshed STU.CA, greater emphasis is placed on presenting information to external audiences. A new content management system provides measurement tools allowing focus on high-return activities that drive traffic and conversions (prospective students requesting information or applying). The homepage has more content for prospective students, parents, and guidance counsellors. The digital-social media strategy is delivered through social media channels, Google, and network display channels with a campaign theme of "The small university of big opportunities." Ads lead potential students to click to STU.CA to "Learn More" / "Book a Campus Tour" / "Apply for Scholarships" / "Apply Now." Campaigns for Open Houses, Events, Student Profiles, and Scholarship Deadlines are also run.

### ***Community Report***

The *St. Thomas University Community Report* profiles the success of students, faculty and alumni, many of whom were supported by community partnerships with external stakeholders and philanthropy. The *Report*, now in its fifth year, was distributed to elected officials, community leaders, alumni, and supporters.

## **Strategic Priority 2 | A Meaningful and Memorable Student Experience**

*St. Thomas University encourages student engagement in university life—inside and outside the classroom—and we strive to provide a safe and supportive environment where students can pursue a range of interests as they realize their potential. Renewed efforts in this area will enhance student engagement, help strengthen the retention of students through to graduation, and foster a vibrant academic, social, and cultural community.*

### **Goal – Developing and implementing a strategic enrolment plan for recruitment and retention to attract qualified and diverse students from Canada and around the world**

#### ***Development of Enrolment Management Strategy***

Comprehensive strategic and operational plans for recruiting and retention have been developed. The former is focusing on increasing first-year student intake by diversifying recruitment markets, improving communications and recruitment messaging, and increasing the effectiveness of the campus tour program. The latter is seeking to increase student retention by enhancing student communication, increasing enriched educational opportunities, and increasing student support services.

#### ***Stabilization of Enrolment***

During the period of this *Plan*, full-time enrolment fell 11.8% to 1953 students. The causes of this decline are varied, with recruitment efforts in New Brunswick particularly challenged by demographic trends. Since 2010, the size of the Anglophone high school graduating class in New Brunswick has declined and is projected to continue to shrink by an additional 9% from 2017 to 2022. Although STU's share of Maritime liberal arts students has remained fairly stable at around 11%, during the ten-year period to 2017 the total number of undergraduate liberal arts students in the Maritimes fell by 23%. Efforts to stabilize enrolment have been successful. There were 596 new full-time students in 2014, 641 in 2015, 662 in 2016, 677 in 2017, and 605 in 2018 and overall enrolment stabilized at 1,953 total full-time students (October 2018). While provincial high school graduates and liberal arts enrolment declined, we have increased our focus on international recruitment and targeted groups. Since 2013, international students have increased from 117 to 169 (44%) and Indigenous students increased from 120 to 157 (31%).

#### ***Retention Success***

The retention goal is a minimum of 70% for first-year students moving to their second year. Numerous programs, including workshops, social events, daily support, and guidance, are delivered to students by staff in the following areas: Academic Advising, Indigenous Student Services, International Student Advisor, Learning Strategist, Writing Centre, Student Accessibility Services, Residence Life, Student Employment, and Campus Ministry. For the period of this *Plan*, the average retention rate has been 72.5% culminating in 79.4% in 2017-18.

#### ***Customer Relationship Management Enterprise System***

The Offices of Recruitment and Admissions successfully implemented an important new Customer Relations Management System to manage communications and admissions processes with prospective students. After the year-long build and implementation, current focus is on enhancing the training of system users and finalizing documentation of system processes for this state-of-the-art system.

#### ***Recruitment Focus – Campus Tours, Faculty Ambassadors, International Student Ambassadors***

Student tour ambassadors provide a student perspective on attending STU. There continues to be a steady increase in the number of campus tours as we promote tours more intentionally and aggressively—positive tour experiences lead to better conversion rates. An International Student Ambassador program has international students posting to social media about life as a student, while the STU Works and SEED programs have allowed students to contribute to various on-campus events and initiatives that support international students. Faculty participate in Recruiting Open Houses at Faculty Fairs, by providing sample classes, and sitting on student-faculty panels. Some have participated in in-school visits, where they've given sample lectures to high school classes. Faculty also partake in a Faculty Fair at which current students can approach them to discuss academic major/honours requirements, etc.

### ***Recruitment Focus – International Agents, Common Ap, On-line Platforms, Virtual Recruitment***

STU works with international agents to maximize international recruitment efforts. This has been a cost-effective means for a small university to broaden international recruitment—STU regularly has international students from more than 30 countries. Being one of the few Canadian universities included in the U.S. Common Application system has given STU a competitive edge in the U.S. and Latin American markets particularly with regards to students and for guidance counsellors, who often upload documents to the system. STU has been experimenting with various webinar platforms in an effort to provide more interactive support to international prospects. The new Customer Relationship Management System (Target X) also offers a chat function, which allows a virtual, live dialogue.

## **| Goal – Providing relevant and accessible support services to optimize each student’s potential**

### ***Survey Benchmarks – NSSE, BSSE, CUSC, MPHEC***

By administering student and graduate surveys, STU gains in-depth understanding of engagement, services, and post-graduation outcomes and creates comparison and benchmarking opportunities. STU has begun to administer the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement for first-year, transfer, and delayed-entry students, collecting data about prior academic and co-curricular experiences, as well as expectations for participating in educationally purposeful activities. The National Survey of Student Engagement examines two critical features of quality for first and fourth year students: the amount of time and effort students put into their studies and how the institution deploys resources and organizes the curriculum and other learning opportunities to get students to participate in activities linked to student learning. STU also administers the Canadian University Survey to first-year students which focuses on motivations, satisfaction, expectations, and experiences. These response-level datasets allow for comparisons with students at other institutions. The Maritime Provinces Higher Education’s Survey of Graduate Outcomes also provides important data about career paths, employment levels, and income levels post-graduation.

### ***Student Services – Increased Staffing and Programming***

Through third-party and internal funding, additional staffing was added in areas that provide services to students. This includes Accessibility Services, Employment and Financial Aid, Experiential Learning, Indigenous Student Services, International Student Services, International Exchanges, Learning Strategist, Mental Health Services, Student Counselling, and the Writing Centre. Over the course of this *Plan*, staff was recognized for achieving excellence in student services in the Atlantic region.

### ***Student Policy Development***

STU strives to create a positive learning environment where there is respect for the dignity of all, fair treatment of individuals, and respect for University resources. As members of our community, students have rights and responsibilities that are explained in our student conduct policies. The new *Non-Academic Misconduct Policy* communicates expectations for student behaviour and the *Policy on Sexual Violence* provides a unified approach to prevent or address incidents of sexual violence. In addition, there are on-going awareness and education activities that take place during Welcome Week and the rest of the academic year. Recent updates to the policies are aimed at making them as user-friendly as possible and encompass a clearer complaint process description, new process flowcharts, and updated contact information.

### ***Tri-Campus Sexual Violence Counselling Services***

STU, UNB, and the New Brunswick Community College have partnered with the Fredericton Sexual Assault Centre to develop a tri-campus sexual assault strategy. With the support and expertise of the Centre, STU can develop innovative ways to be proactive in creating a safe campus community for students with a focus on policy development, prevention and education, interventions and response, and research and evaluation.

### ***Mental Health Programming and Services***

Over the course of this *Plan*, STU has developed student programming that focuses on social connections, wellness, and mental health education. For students with coping concerns, there are self-management skills, help-seeking behaviours, and programs to encourage early identification and referrals. For students in crisis, there are counselling and mental health services, emergency response protocols, and co-ordination with medical, community, and family supports. STU is also playing a leadership role in a national Alcohol Harms Reduction initiative.



### ***Students' Union Donation for Mental Health Services and Programming***

The students of STU, through their Students' Union, have made a \$300,000 gift to the University. Pledged over four years, the funds will be used to enhance mental health services and programming. A Working Group comprised of faculty, staff and students monitors an annual *Action Plan* whose activities range from collecting baseline data, opening a Mental Health Resource Centre and Peer Resource Centre, and delivering mental health training.

## **| Goal – Developing a systematic approach to leadership development and community service**

### ***Student Engagement Activities***

Over the period of this *Plan*, STU students have participated in, presented at, and hosted the East Coast Student Leadership Conference. The ECSLC is an opportunity for student leaders from the Atlantic region to gather and share ideas, become inspired, and leave determined to make a difference on their campus and/or in their community. The conference is comprised of workshops, networking and brainstorming sessions, social activities, and keynote presentations. Staff in Student Services have organized several STU Leads! Events, an energy-packed, one-day event that provides student leaders with the opportunity to learn about various leadership topics and styles, while also developing tangible skills. STU Peer Mentoring connects first-year students (mentees) with senior students (mentors) trained to help with the transition into university life. The mentor will be a support network, listen in a non-judgmental way, assist with goal setting and connect first-year students with opportunities on campus. Mentors and mentees meet once a week to touch base, talk about any challenges, and build connections.

### ***STU Cares Day of Action / Student United Way***

A Student's United Way group began STU Cares which has now grown into an important Welcome Week activity for students each September. Teams of student volunteers go out into the community to learn about the work of a local community organization and do hands-on work to support that organization. Students work on such issues as poverty, food security, environmental preservation, homelessness, domestic violence, youth, and community building. The day concludes with a chance to reflect on the service, social issues in the community, and connections to what is being learned in class. Over the period of the *Plan*, more than 600 students have taken part in STU Cares. For its volunteer work, the Student's United Way group received the United Way's Community Builder Award, the first university in the region to win this award.

## **| Goal – Committing to a personalized student experience characterized by close student-faculty interaction and supportive staff**

### ***Student Outcomes***

According to the National Survey of Student Engagement, the pre-eminent measure of student engagement, STU was in the Canadian top ten for providing a supportive student environment and student-faculty interaction. STU graduates 400 students each year and studies show these students:

- rate their faculty significantly higher than their Maritime or Canadian counterparts
- will have significantly greater engagement with civic issues, environmental sustainability, and social diversity
- are significantly more likely than national peers to support community causes and social justice/human rights concerns

## **| Goal – Providing a diverse range of extracurricular activities**

### ***Supporting Student Activities***

Student-led activities and events continue to evolve on campus. Recent additions to the community include Global Brigades, the largest student-led social responsibility movement in the world, which has taken students to Honduras and Panama to engage in humanitarian efforts. The student-initiated and organized Black History Month events have hosted an impressive roster of guests including representatives from Black Lives Matter Toronto and award winning-poets. The Campus Ministry Dominican Republic Service Trip, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Training Conference, and the Multicultural Fair are other examples of initiatives where students play an active role in organizing, from fundraising to execution. The Office of Advancement and various University Offices and Academic Departments provide financial support for these events and/or allocate resources for promotional and organizational purposes.



| **Goal – Investing in the renewal of our residences and strengthening the support for residence life**

***Residence Renewal***

Students living in Harrington Hall have a bright, modern, and inclusive residence to call home. After a year of renovations, Harrington re-opened its doors in 2017. While the general layout of the building is the same, the walls, floors, and heating systems have been updated. The newly renovated Harrington also includes upgraded residence rooms, a kitchenette, modernized theme lounge and study areas, improved washroom layouts, as well as gender neutral washrooms, and accessible residence rooms, washroom, and lounge. The renewal of Vanier Hall is tentatively planned for Spring 2020.

***Food Services Advisory Committee / Visiting Director Evaluation of Food Services***

In 2019, a Food Services Advisory Committee was created to engage students and obtain their feedback on food services, periodically review policies, and develop strategies to enhance food services. In addition, STU and Aramark, as members of Canadian College Food Services Organization, engaged an external Visiting Director's Evaluation Team to undertake a food service review visit and engage stakeholders as part of an improvement process.

| **Goal – Expanding dedicated communal space for students**

***Sir James Dunn Hall Student Lounge and The Great Hall***

A new student lounge was added in Sir James Dunn Hall and has proven to be a popular location on campus. Filled with students on a daily basis, the lounge has also hosted student election debates, book launches, announcements, media events, and premiers, ambassadors, and prime ministers. Additionally, the Great Hall, located in George Martin Hall, is a popular place for students to meet, socialize, study, read or enjoy a quiet moment among the large windows and commemorative stained glass windows.

## **Strategic Priority 3 | A Commitment to Research and Societal Engagement**

*St. Thomas University recognizes the importance of scholarly research to achieving its goal of excellence in undergraduate liberal arts education and in making a distinctive contribution to society. We have a very high proportion of faculty with PhDs or equivalent credentials. They are uniquely placed to design and carry out research and artistic activities that create knowledge and address issues of importance to the community.*

### **| Goal – Strengthening support for faculty research**

#### **Strategic Research Plan 2014-2019**

Faculty produced first-rate research during the period covered by the University's third *Strategic Research Plan*. This is evidenced by international and national awards, the success of two e-journals (*Narrative Works* and the *Journal of New Brunswick Studies/Revue d'études sur le Nouveau-Brunswick*), as well as numerous books and peer-reviewed articles. Faculty have also produced theatre, poetry, art, and musical compositions. This research has been funded by external sources such as SSHRC, NSERC, CIHR, the CRC Secretariat, CIDA, DIAND, Health Canada, Justice Canada, Human Resources Development Canada, Canadian Heritage, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Mitacs, Status of Women Canada, Province of New Brunswick, NB Innovation Foundation, NB Council on the Arts, NB Health Research Foundation, NS Health Research Foundation, Ontario AIDS Network, National Institute for Education (US), and the Donner Foundation. The Canadian Foundation for Innovation has also contributed financial support for research infrastructure. In addition, research has been funded by focused internal grants financed in part by the University.

#### **New Strategic Research Plan 2019-2024**

The *Strategic Research Plan* serves as an internal reference point regarding the development of STU's research culture. It offers a descriptive snapshot of research while also serving as an aspirational document. The University has identified eight areas where there is a critical mass of expertise or opportunities for developing capacity: (1) Narrative Studies (2) Global and International Studies (3) Indigenous Studies and Indigenous Knowledge (4) Health, Wellness, and Aging (5) Social Justice, Human Rights, and Identities (6) Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change (7) Arts and Culture, and (8) New Brunswick Studies. The two main operational goals of the new *Research Plan* are to have faculty conduct high quality, ethically-sound, research in these fields and to increase external/internal support for research and dissemination.

### **| Goal – Promoting the regional and national visibility of faculty research and creative work**

#### **Profiles / Features / Media Relations / Social Media**

The research and creative work of faculty provide opportunities to promote St. Thomas University and the quality of our faculty. Over the course of this *Strategic Plan*, profiles of new faculty members, book launches, features on faculty research and features on research awards were featured in the *Connections Magazine* (10,500+ alumni reached), the *Community Report* (distributed nationally), and on [www.stu.ca](http://www.stu.ca). For example, feature-length profiles were published on: Dr. Brad Cross, AAU Distinguished Teaching Award for 2013; Dr. Martin Kutnowski, AAU Distinguished Teaching Award for 2014; Dr. Michael Dawson and Dr. Catherine Gidney, new members of Royal Society of Canada's College of New Scholars, Artists and Scientists; new health Research Chair Dr. Albert Banerjee; and Dr. Michelle Lafrance and Dr. Kristi Allain, among many other faculty members. These profiles were also highlighted on the Universities social media channels.

#### **Academic Journals**

The launch of each edition of an academic journal housed at STU provides an opportunity to promote faculty research and its importance to the community. For example, the *Journal of New Brunswick Studies* special issue on Electoral Reform was supported by a media op/ed in a provincial newspaper and front-page cover of the issue and the *Journal*.

#### **New Brunswick English Literature Curriculum**

The New Brunswick Literature Curriculum in English is Dr. Tony Tremblay's latest innovative project. The NBLCE is a free web resource for teachers, students, and others interested in learning more about New Brunswick literature. Designed for use in New Brunswick high schools, the curriculum features 44 authors and poets who were from, lived in, or wrote about the province, such as modernist poet Elizabeth Brewster and Miramichi author Ray Fraser. It includes selected readings, biographical information, and strategies for teachers who wish to use the material in their classrooms.

## **Strategic Priority 4 | A Welcoming, Diverse and Inclusive Community**

*Members of the St. Thomas University community—students, faculty, staff, and alumni—are justifiably proud of our beautiful campus and recognize its contribution to creating an environment conducive to learning. At the same time, we strive to match this aesthetic appeal with warmth and openness. We are known as a welcoming and diverse community where members have the opportunity to explore their intellectual and cultural interests in a supportive environment.*

### **Goal – Developing and implementing a Strategic Recruitment Plan designed to attract qualified and diverse students from across Canada and around the world**

#### ***Enrolment Management***

Comprehensive strategic and operational plans for recruiting and retention have been developed. The former is focusing on increasing first-year student intake by diversifying recruitment markets, improving communications and recruitment messaging, and increasing the effectiveness of the campus tour program. The latter is seeking to increase student retention by enhancing student communication and increasing enriched educational opportunities and student support service. These efforts have successfully stabilized enrollment in a market that has a declining population of university-aged cohorts and less interest in the liberal arts.

#### ***Success in International / Indigenous Recruitment***

International students now comprise more than 9% of the overall enrollment and there has been a 44% increase in international students from 117 in 2013 to 169 in 2018 (Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>). STU has developed a variety of successful recruitment efforts in established territories such as building interest through school visits, “Study in Canada Fairs”, individual students meetings, and revisiting primary international markets. Positive relationships with Global Affairs Canada’s local missions, as well as the use of education fairs and agent visits have supplemented our efforts. Indigenous recruitment has also been an area for growth from 120 students in 2013 to 157 students in 2018, a 31% increase. As a result, Indigenous students now make up more than 9% of the student body. This growth reflects new recruitment activities, including visiting high schools, holding our first-ever Indigenous Post-Secondary Recruitment Fair, First Nations’ Powwows, information sessions in communities, and relationship-building with First Nations Education Directors and community leaders.

### **Goal – Becoming the university of choice for NB Indigenous students and providing the support necessary for their success**

#### ***Establishment of the Wabanaki Centre / Indigenous Student Orientation***

A culturally and spiritually rich environment for academic and personal support, the Wabanaki Student Centre serves as a daily starting point for many Indigenous students. Whether it is to have a coffee, finish an assignment, or relax with friends, the Centre is a home away from home. The space includes a small kitchenette and is decorated with Indigenous artwork and photos that reflect the history of First Nations in New Brunswick. First-year Indigenous students are able to move into residence early and are invited to participate in an orientation event to meet upper-year students who are following a similar path.

#### ***Indigenous Student Programing and Services***

Indigenous students represent about 9% of our student population which is a higher percentage of Indigenous students than provincial and national population averages. Indigenous students are offered support from culturally-rich events, activities, supports and services, including student exchanges, employment, counselling services, traditional ceremonies, guest speakers, and opportunities to participate in workshops, conferences, traditional gatherings, and more. Elder-in-Residence, Miigam’agan, provides support to Indigenous students and acts as an important link between the university and First Nation communities. A student counsellor provides a supportive and nurturing experience for students by bringing both Indigenous and western knowledge and experience to her counselling approach, and a student service co-ordinator provides guidance to Indigenous students making the transition to university.

### ***Aotiiij Program – Elsipogtog First Nation Outreach***

An Aboriginal education initiative in collaboration with the Elsipogtog First Nation was started during the period of this Plan. St. Thomas University is offering university-level courses in Elsipogtog. Upon successful completion of these courses, students are eligible to continue on to degree programs at St. Thomas or other universities.

### ***St. Mary's Language Courses – "LIYANE LEWESTOCIK"***

St. Thomas University works with the First Nations at Tobique and St. Mary's to deliver language programs. The St. Mary's First Nation Adult Maliseet Language Program is a two-year linguistic and cultural program designed for non-speakers. The first part consists of St. Thomas University language credit courses derived from our Native Language Immersion Teacher's Certificate Programme. The slogan of the SMFN Maliseet Language Program is "LIYANE LEWESTOCIK" or "Let's Make Speakers!"

### ***Committee on Indigenization - National Conference on Indigenization / Special Events***

The Senate Committee on Reconciliation organizes events and activities to promote an improved understanding of Indigenous issues and culture. Both a public reading of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action and a national conference on Indigenization of the Academy were well-attended. An on-going film series, which included filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin, has been well received by the community, and the performance and talk by Polaris Music and Juno Prize winner Jeremy Dutcher was very successful.

## **| Goal – Promoting a respectful community free from discrimination**

### ***Harassment and Discrimination Policy***

The *Student Harassment and Discrimination Policy* which pertains to student-to-student relations and forms part of the *Student Code of Conduct* was implemented during the period of this plan. As well, training for faculty and staff on the *University's Harassment and Discrimination* policy was completed. These recommendations have now been incorporated into our hiring practices.

### ***New Policies on Sexual Violence and Student Conduct***

STU strives to create a positive learning environment where there is respect for the dignity of all, fair treatment of individuals, and respect for University resources. As members of our community, students have rights and responsibilities that are explained in our student conduct policies. The new *Non-Academic Misconduct Policy* communicates our expectations for student behaviour and the *Policy on Sexual Violence* provides a unified approach to prevent or address incidents of sexual violence. In addition, there are on-going awareness and education activities that take place during Welcome Week and the rest of the year. Recent updates to the policies are aimed at making the policies as user-friendly as possible and encompass a clearer complaint process description, new process flowcharts, and updated contact information.

### ***Advisory Committee on Employment Equity***

Further to a memorandum of agreement in the full-time faculty collective agreement, a Special Advisory Committee on Employment Equity developed a report with recommendations to the President for monitoring and advancing equity in recruitment, selection, and hiring of faculty.

### ***Safe Spaces Program***

Inspired by the desire to "be who you needed when you were younger," Dr. Erin Fredericks has worked to make STU a safer place for queer and trans students. As facilitator of the Safer Spaces Program, Fredericks developed an LGBTQIA+ inclusion workshop for staff and faculty. She has offered the workshop on campus and to community organizations, as well as to the New Brunswick Department of Justice and Public Safety. As STU's LGBTQIA+ Resource Advisor, she meets with students, supports queer and trans equity initiatives, and advises staff and faculty. She has also supported the work of the Q&A Student Society, facilitating the raising of the Trans Flag at STU, advocating for queer and trans students facing issues, and helping to establish all-gender washrooms on campus.

## **| Goal – Increasing participation of internal and external communities in our activities**

### ***Promotion of Events to Campus / Off-Campus Communities***

The University annually hosts more than 200 programs or events which are promoted to the campus and wider community. Many activities, lectures, exhibitions, musical performances and theatrical performances receive paid promotion, media releases, and social media pushes.

### ***Universities Canada Social Impact Initiative***

STU is working with Universities Canada on a Social Impact Initiative to explore opportunities to advance campus-community partnerships for greater impact. (Social impact is defined as the positive outcomes of initiatives that tackle social, economic, environmental, and cultural challenges faced by people, organizations, and communities.) The aim of this initiative is to gain a deeper understanding of social impact initiatives at Canadian universities, to build tools to increase capacity and share knowledge, and to develop a robust narrative on the role of universities in their communities.

### ***Criminology MOU with Fredericton City Police***

A new partnership agreement between the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice and the Fredericton City Police allows Criminology students to gain valuable community-based experience in policing as part of the course CRIM-4053 Advanced Studies in Youth Justice Policies.

## **| Goal – Embracing the Environmental Sustainability of our campus**

### ***President’s Advisory Committee on Campus Environmental Issues***

Many of the recommended initiatives from the environmental audit of the campus conducted by the President’s Advisory Committee on Campus Environmental Issues are underway. These include energy audits, retrofits of campus buildings, new bottle refill water fountains, water reduction competitions, use of two-sided default settings on copiers, and recycling promotion. Recently, a new Energy-Star rated dishwasher installed in George Martin dining hall has provided water and steam reductions for the cafeteria. The use of newly installed hot water heaters in one building have resulted in reduced steam energy consumption during low-peak summer months. The Committee will soon bring forward a proposal for future initiatives related to the environmental audit recommendations.

## **| Goal – Fostering pride and confidence in our collective accomplishments**

### ***Teaching / Research / Service Excellence Awards***

At Summer Convocation, the community recognizes excellence in faculty teaching, research, and service with the John McKendry Memorial Teaching Award, the Excellence in Part-Time Teaching Award, and the University Scholarship Award.

- The John McKendry Memorial Teaching Award recognizes teaching quality and effectiveness: Dr. Monica Stelzl (Psychology), Dr. Grant Williams (Education), Dr. Amanda DiPaolo (Human Rights), Dr. Karen Robert (History), Dr. Sara MacDonald (Great Books), Dr. Martin Kutnowski (Fine Arts), Dr. Brad Cross (History)
- The University Scholarship Award recognizes scholarly work including research, publications, and work of creative or cultural significance: Dr. Christian Mbarga (French), Dr. Carey Watt (History), Dr. Matte Robinson (English), Dr. Michelle Lafrance (Psychology), Dr. Julia Torrie (History), Dr. Cecelia Francis (French), Dr. Rusty Bittermann (History)
- The University Service Award recognizes individual faculty contributions to the University, the professional field, the union, and the community: Dr. Sharon Murray (Education), Dr. Patrick Malcolmson (Political Science), Dr. Erin Fredericks (Sociology), Dr. Susan Reid (Criminology), Dr. Sue McKenzie-Mohr (Social Work)
- The Excellence in Part-Time Teaching Award recognizes teaching quality and effectiveness: Dr. Janet Durkee-Lloyd (Gerontology), Dr. Bonnie Huskins (History), and Professor Mark Tunney (Journalism)

### ***Distinguished Alumni Award***

STU has launched the Carolyn Layden-Stevenson Distinguished Alumni Award which recognizes the outstanding accomplishments of alumni who have earned prominence as a result of their professional achievements and/or service to society. The award is presented at each Gala Dinner, an important event that has raised more than \$2 million to support students. The Carolyn Layden-Stevenson Distinguished Alumni Award winners have been:

- 2019 - Ned Bowes, Sheree Fitch, David Adams Richards
- 2017 - Jack Walsh, Tom Isaac, and Michelle Arévalo
- 2016 - Roger Clinch, Stephen Ward
- 2014 - Bernard Riordon

### ***St. Tommies Wall of Fame Website***

The St. Thomas University Sports Wall of Fame was launched to recognize individuals and teams who have made a significant contribution to athletic programs at STU, and who, as a result of their contributions, have enhanced the image and the reputation of the institution. Inductees can be athletes, builders (coaches, managers, athletic staff or administrators), or teams.

### ***Launch of A History of St. Thomas University Website / Publication of Church, Politics and STU***

Based on research carried out in hitherto restricted archives, *Church, Politics, and STU: The Relocation of St. Thomas University from Chatham to Fredericton* is an abridgement of a longer work entitled *A History of St. Thomas University: The Formative Years, 1860–1990*. Drs. Spray and Rhinelander paint a nuanced historical picture of St. Thomas's evolution from a small Roman Catholic college founded in 1860 on the Miramichi to a nationally recognized liberal arts university. The book deals primarily with the 1950s and 1960s and the political and religious circumstances in which the relocation of STU from Chatham to Fredericton was carried out. A website hosts the manuscript for *A History of St. Thomas University: The Formative Years, 1860–1990*.

## **| Goal – Enhancing STU's link to its talented and accomplished alumni network**

### ***Alumni Engagement Index***

For most of the period of this *Strategic Plan*, the Advancement Office was tracking numbers of alumni who participated in on-campus events, attended events in their area, or were donors through the Direct Mail, STU Fund, or Phonathon. While researching the Contactable Alumni Rate (those alumni for whom we have a good mailing address, phone number, or email address, and when possible, at least two of these three) the practice of recording the Alumni Engagement Index was reexamined. It was determined that a more relevant way of tracking would be to consider both 'alumni and friends' and to include members of the larger community who participate in University events. Consequently, in 2017 the method of calculation was changed. The Alumni Engagement Index has historically been calculated to illustrate the level of alumni engagement, over a finite period of time and from year to year, and has been based on giving, volunteerism, and event attendance. In 2017, this calculation was expanded to include community engagement and all activities for which there is both an alumni and a community audience, including such things as lectures, conferences, sports, workshops, and exhibits.

- Alumni Engagement Index for FY 2017-18 – 596
- Alumni Engagement Index for May 1, 2018 to January 31, 2019 – 3266

## **Strategic Priority 5 | Financial Sustainability**

*Our vision is that St. Thomas University will have diversified, sustainable, and predictable sources of revenue capable of supporting our mission. We will strive to obtain provincial funding that is sustainable and equitable compared with other New Brunswick universities, and strive to establish tuition rates that reflect the quality of the educational experience we offer students. We will work to increase our annual funds and endowments in order to increase student access to post-secondary education, contribute more to annual operating costs, and support our mission.*

### **| Goal – Continuing to advocate for autonomy in setting tuition and equitable government funding**

#### ***Tuition Agreement with the Provincial Government***

In 2013, the Provincial Government and St. Thomas University established a five-year domestic tuition fee schedule as part of a larger agreement that included a positive and permanent adjustment to the operating grant of \$225,000 (1.7% increase). As part of this agreement, domestic tuition was increased annually by no more than 3% plus \$170 (6.1% annual average) that brought STU's tuition close to the provincial average. The academic year 2017-18 was the final year of that agreement. A *Tuition Fee Guideline*, under development, will describe the factors and parameters that are considered in determining tuition fees which are recommended to the Board of Governors for approval. By means of comparison, 2018-19 domestic and international tuition at 14 Maritime universities show that STU has the fourth lowest domestic and fourth lowest international tuition.

#### ***Seeking Funding Equity***

St. Thomas University students are underfunded compared to students attending other provincial universities, an inequity confirmed in 2007 by the Commission on Post-Secondary Education. It concluded that "St. Thomas clearly suffers from a funding anomaly that needs to be addressed" and that STU is "supported at a level well below the other universities in the province." STU's operating grant is currently 89% of the provincial average in terms of each weighted full-time enrolment, which results in underfunding of \$1.4 million annually. As a result, STU students contribute a higher proportion of the cost of their education through tuition and fees than students at other universities. Even though tuition is at the provincial average, students pay 43% of the cost of their education, while other students in the province pay an average of 34%. This is because the province pays a lower proportion of the cost of each student's education at STU than it does for students at other universities. Achieving a balance between equitable funding from government and revenue from affordable tuition for students is necessary, and advocacy efforts, including an appearance at the Legislative Assembly Select Committee on Public Universities and meetings with ministers and senior officials with the Provincial Government, have continued.

### **| Goal – Developing and implementing a long-term strategy for tuition and student financial aid**

#### ***Tuition and Financial Aid***

A short-term strategy for student financial aid was developed early in the *Strategic Plan* with major scholarships adjusted to cover tuition and annual increases in tuition. With the completion of the five-year tuition agreement with the Provincial Government, a long-term strategy related to tuition and student financial assistance is being developed. A *Tuition Fee Guideline*, currently under development, will describe the factors and parameters that are considered in determining tuition fees recommended to the Board of Governors. Related to this, as the funding of scholarships has become an increasingly important challenge, the University will create an internal Standing Committee on Scholarships to establish operating parameters and monitor funding sources and expenditures.

### **| Goal – Establishing an appropriately staffed and effective Office of Advancement and Alumni Affairs**

#### ***Staffing in Office of Advancement and Alumni Relations / Development of Strategic Operating Plan***

Following an external review of the Advancement function, which includes alumni relations and development, the position of Vice-President (Advancement) was created and staffed. Subsequently, the position of Director of Annual Giving and Alumni Relations was staffed to focus on annual giving operations, personal visits and enhancing alumni engagement efforts. New gift acceptance policies and procedures will mitigate risk associated with unusual gifts and ensure the intentions/interests of the university and donor are documented. A working group has created an Advancement and Alumni Relations Strategic Operating Plan that identifies purpose, goals, and key strategic initiatives.



## **| Goal – Significantly increasing financial support from alumni**

### ***Alumni and Advancement Support***

STU tracks donations in a quarterly report to the Board of Governors, which measures ‘cash in the door’ against cash received for the same period in the previous fiscal year and in a separate Campaign for St. Thomas Report (see below). Over the period of this *Strategic Plan*, there has been growth since 2013 of ‘cash in the door’ with the amount doubling to almost \$1.6 million. A campaign will affect donations by bringing more cash in the door as pledge payments, by bringing in larger donations from entities and people who are not regular donors, and by increasing donations from those who are regular donors to the annual fund and who will also give a special gift during a campaign.

- 2013-2014 - \$657,400
- 2014-2015 - \$1,168,662
- 2015-2016 - \$673,558
- 2016-2017 - \$1,014,637
- 2017-2018 - \$1,599,944

## **| Goal – Increased giving from non-alumni, corporations and foundations**

### ***The Campaign for St. Thomas University***

The Campaign for St. Thomas, the most ambitious and comprehensive fundraising campaign in the University’s history is well underway with a tracking/pledge period of January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2020. Still in the “quiet phase”, it has already reached a preliminary target of \$10.5 million dollars. The campaign has three significant objectives:

- Transforming the Student Experience through the provision of scholarships and bursaries, emergency aid, investment in Indigenous programming and support, and in experiential learning, civic engagement, and study abroad opportunities.
- Academic Excellence and Leadership in Liberal Arts will include funding for undergraduate research, for a non-endowed chair and two endowed chairs, an endowment for Undergraduate Moot Court, and funding for faculty professional development.
- Campus Stewardship will allow renovation, refurbishment, and upgrades to both Harrington Hall and Vanier Hall, as well as updates to the Black Box Theatre and other potential locations.

STU is fortunate to be joined by an outstanding group of volunteers who have offered their leadership and commitment to help. These leaders and supporters see St. Thomas as a university worthy of their investment, because they believe in the vision and leadership of the President and Board of Governors, the outstanding students, and the achievements of alumni. St. Thomas is thrilled to have the support of the Right Honorable Brian Mulroney, the Honorable Frank McKenna, John Bragg, the Honorable Graydon Nicholas, Ann Evans, the Arthur Irving family, Peter Forestell, Vaughn Sturgeon, Bill Whalen, and Chuck Firlotte.