

Memo



ST. JOHN'S
UNIVERSITY

Date: August 6, 2024

To: All Deans*

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SUBJECT: 2024-2025 Academic Year Priorities for Faculty Members

As a new academic year begins, it is important to look back and reflect on our collective accomplishments of the past year, of which there are many. We have been guided in our work by the *University Strategic Plan* and we have made great progress, particularly as it relates to Pillar 2: *Academic Distinction - Excellence in Teaching, Learning, and Research*. Together, we have successfully shepherded in a new core curriculum, we have used the Strategic Program Positioning (SP2) initiative to assess our academic programs in a brand new way, we have formed new partnerships, we have designed workshops to assist and advance faculty in the classroom, and we have opened up new avenues to support and celebrate the groundbreaking and entrepreneurial research and scholarship by our faculty. As we continue to move forward, we recognize and emphasize that **faculty success drives student success**. With this in mind, the academic priorities for the 2024-2025 academic year are as follows:

Enrollment

The enrollment landscape remains highly competitive, and with the introduction of significant challenges and delays caused by the new FAFSA application this past year, Enrollment Management remains focused on strategic initiatives designed to optimize efforts in enrolling new students. These efforts include reassessing new student searches, identifying new populations of students and audiences, modifying our financial aid leveraging strategy, and expanding upon our personalized and customized communications to prospective students, their families, and their influencers. We are also continuing to strategically expand and solidify partnerships with select high schools, establishing clear student pathways to St. John's.

Our focus on initiatives that increase yield and reduce summer melt continues, and they include; faculty outreach to admitted students, parent and family engagement through the *Parent and Family University* events, and student engagement through the *Explore and More* initiative.

For the 2024-2025 academic year, we will continue to optimize our undergraduate student recruitment and yield efforts whilst at the same time intensify our focus on graduate student enrollment initiatives.

Unfortunately, the enrollment landscape is going to remain challenging in years to come. Despite this, I remain very optimistic because we as an institution understand that we **all** play a vital role in recruiting and enrolling the next incoming class of students. It requires the focus and drive of every one of us and we have shown that we can be successful through this collaborative approach. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all faculty, administrators, and staff who have established themselves as enrollment partners. Your efforts are impactful and very much appreciated, and I look forward to your continued collaboration in the 2024-2025 academic year.

Asynchronous, Online Graduate Programs

Data shows us that between 2012-2019, ~70% of US graduate students enrolled in traditional face-to-face graduate programs whilst ~30% enrolled in online (asynchronous) graduate programs. One year post-COVID, the demand for online, and particularly asynchronous online, graduate programs increased by 63%, a trend that is continuing. As the marketplace shifts so must we. This has resulted in an unprecedented collaboration between the Office of the Provost, Marketing and Communications, Enrollment Management, Colleges/Schools, and individual graduate programs. We have worked diligently over the past year to develop three fully asynchronous, online graduate programs that will launch this fall. This was no small feat, and I want to thank everyone involved for making this successful.

As we enter year two of this initiative, three additional asynchronous, online graduate programs will be developed and launched, paving the way for a new graduate program constellation here at St. John's. My hope is that, as we move forward, other academic departments across the institution will see this as a great opportunity to elevate their graduate programs to meet the needs of our students.

Strategic Program Positioning

The Strategic Program Positioning (SP2) initiative is part of our institutional assessment effort that brings together all stakeholders across the University into a data-based dialogue on how our academic programs meet the needs of our students and the strategic vision of St. John's. SP2 has built a successful pipeline by utilizing multiple factors including enrollment metrics, retention, graduation rates, occupational growth, peer program data, mission, program improvement through assessment, and the external funding environment. The findings from the annual SP2 process will be used to make critical decisions on resource allocation, targeted program enhancement, new program development, and the phasing out/consolidation of programs, all based on this shared and transparent data system.

This was the first year of SP2 implementation and the process will continue to evolve. In an environment where student demographics are changing, the job market is fluctuating, and the value of higher education is being questioned, we must critically evaluate and improve our academic program portfolio to align with the marketplace. I ask that you continue to support the SP2 process as we move forward.

Expanding Entrepreneurial and Research Efforts

St. John's continues to foster student and faculty entrepreneurship and innovation through the Venture and Innovation Center (VIC) and Venture Clinical Laboratory. The VIC offers an open ecosystem for the St. John's community to grow and develop ideas, and since late fall last year the center has made tremendous progress. In addition to a plethora of workshops and speaker series, the VIC has supported five faculty/student teams in their efforts to enter the National Science Foundation's (NSF) iCorps Program, with three teams in the regional program and one team in the National iCorps Program. Since its inception, the VIC has received six disclosures of innovations that have the potential to be commercialized. Connected to the VIC is The Venture Clinical Laboratory (NYSDoH CLIA accredited) which provides an active platform for the commercialization of faculty-driven research and is transforming St. John's research from the bench to New York State approved laboratory developed tests. I ask that you encourage your students and faculty to contact the VIC with new ideas and innovations.

This year we also launched new cross-disciplinary seed grants, funding up to \$50,000 for collaborative research programs between schools/colleges, departments, and disciplines involving students, with the aim to form centers of excellence in the future. We will continue to fund new cross-disciplinary initiatives as we move forward, and I encourage your faculty members to consider applying for this opportunity.

Center for Faculty Success and Development

The Center for Faculty Success and Development (CFSD) offers a number of ways for faculty members to engage with their colleagues and the campus community in relation to pedagogical practices, innovations, and resources. This upcoming year, there will be several funded growth opportunities to which faculty (both full-time and adjunct) can apply, including our Growth Grants, the CFSD Fellows Program, and the CFSD Scholars-in-Residence Program (<https://campusguides.stjohns.edu/cfsd-resources/home>). Our University-wide mentoring initiative, the FLEX Program (Fostering a Learning EXchange), which launched last year for new faculty will be expanded this year to offer mentoring tracks for all levels of faculty at the University. With this program, the University seeks to enhance our faculty members experience and to ensure that faculty members have the resources needed to further their professional and academic careers.

The CFSD will also be offering two scaffolded lunch-and-learn series this year, where faculty members will get more in-depth knowledge and understanding of specific campus offices and the resources to which they have access. This year's series will focus on: the grant writing process, from application to implementation; and mental health and wellness for faculty, in terms of best practices and resources. The CFSD will continue to host a number of additional workshops moving forward, showcasing the pedagogical expertise of our faculty.

Please encourage your faculty members to get involved with the CFSD. We are one faculty community and by learning from one another we will elevate not only ourselves but also our students.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Policy 007

We believe that our faculty members and students can be most successful in an environment that embraces Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. To that end, the University instituted the Policy on Inclusive Practices and Dismantling Racism (IPDR, Policy 007) earlier this year which underscores the importance of creating “a climate that is inclusive and welcoming, a community of belonging, where everyone feels respected, valued and safe.” The first step in instituting this policy was an audit of existing diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Next, each major area across the institution is developing three major goals that directly advance inclusive practices, dismantle racism, and align our University community with our Catholic and Vincentian values.

For academic year 2024-2025, the three goals established for all areas reporting to the Provost are as follows: 1) Staffing and Climate: By March 1, 2025, we will develop, review, communicate and implement an internal process to increase equity in hiring informed by institutional, industry and regional data, 2) Professional Engagement and Support: By April 1, 2025, 50% of existing employees, 100% of those who supervise, and 100% of new employees will complete at least one Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion skill-based training, and 3) Communications, Policies, Curriculum/Programming: By March 1, 2025, we will have begun the process of reviewing academic policies, practices, and procedures to identify and mitigate bias; each unit will make at least one recommendation for implementation to increase student retention, belonging and success.

It is expected that all unit leaders will create action plans to realize the accomplishment of these goals for the upcoming academic year. These units will provide an update to the Office of the Provost and Office of Equity and Inclusion on a quarterly basis. We strongly believe that instituting and fulfilling the requirements of this policy will contribute to the University's commitment to achieve equity and inclusivity for all members of the campus community.

Reaccreditation: Middle States Commission on Higher Education

By mid-September, 2024 the Self-Study Report draft will be made available to the University community. This draft represents the tireless work of numerous committees composed of faculty, students, administrators, and staff all working to support a thorough and informative self-study. There will be follow-up communications when the draft is available, but we ask that you prepare your units to engage in the self-study process by reading, discussing, and sharing feedback and perspectives at Faculty Councils, Town Halls, and other venues.

Dr. Peter K. Kilpatrick, President of the Catholic University of America, has been assigned as our Site Team Chair. The Steering Committee Co-Chairs, Olga Hilas, Pharm.D., M.P.H., Professor/Industry Professional, Department of Clinical Health Professions, College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, and James D.

Wolfinger, Ph.D., Dean, The School of Education, along with the full Steering Committee, will welcome him to campus on Friday, November 8, 2024 for a preliminary visit to discuss the self-study report draft. The final Self-Study report is due to MSCHE in January 2025 and the full site-visit to our main campus will take place in late March 2025.

A successful self-study requires the involvement of our entire University community and your engagement and feedback are critical as we continue with the self-study process. Please visit our dedicated MSCHE Accreditation webpage <https://www.stjohns.edu/middle-states-accreditation> for more information on the process, urge all community members to attend Town Halls, and share your perspectives with the Steering Committee as we move forward towards completing this process.

Welcome to the 2024-2025 academic year! I very much look forward to working with you during this exciting time.

- * Dean Teresa Delgado
- Dean Caroline Fuchs
- Dean Luca Iandoli
- Dean Jelani Jefferson Exum
- Dean Anne Lin
- Dean Maciek Nowak
- Dean James Wolfinger