ACADEMIC BLUEPRINT
QUEST. CHANGE. LEAD.
2010-2014 SUMMARY OF SUCCESS
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I am pleased to share with you the results of our Academic Blueprint, an academic plan designed to make a Saint Mary’s College experience that is more intense, integrated, and unique, culminating in immersion in a world of wisdom to create leadership for social justice. The Blueprint has had a significant impact on our academic distinction, advancing the inclusiveness, collaboration, and shared inquiry demanded by our mission.

Through the implementation of the Academic Blueprint, our students, faculty, and staff report that we have made substantial strides toward creating a truly inclusive community. We have expanded our global focus through faculty and curriculum development, student experience, and engagement of international students. We have invested in academic excellence through greater support for faculty teaching and service, faculty and student research, student performance, and facilities improvements, including classroom and office renovation, and a $1 million upgrade of our library infrastructure. We have continued to enroll a diverse, academically prepared student body, improved student outcomes and satisfaction among both graduate and undergraduate students, and surpassed projected improvements in retention and graduation rates.

I am grateful to the entire community for the commitment and talent given to the implementation of the Academic Blueprint. Together, we have strengthened a foundation for the College’s distinctive academic identity to grow through the implementation of the College’s next strategic plan.

Sincerely,

Bethami Dobkin, Ph.D.
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
In September 2009, the Academic Blueprint Task Force convened to fulfill the charge articulated in the College’s “Building on Strengths” Strategic Plan, the submission of a five-year academic plan—graduate and undergraduate—including program expansion, projected enrollments, needed staffing and space, and projected costs and revenues. The “Academic Blueprint” became that academic plan, with actions and indicators of progress to achieve within a five-year time-span, while at the same time laying a foundation for an academic identity and distinction intended to live for years beyond the plan.

The desire to further build the College’s strong academic foundation guided the development of the Blueprint and included the following objectives:

- Develop a cohesive, integrated, and inclusive academic identity that includes graduate and undergraduate programs.
- Improve the College’s academic standing both locally and nationally.
- Maintain an effective, engaging, and challenging curriculum for all students.
- Enhance our national reputation and contributions as a leader in social justice and community engagement.
- Expand global awareness and engagement.

In September 2009, the Saint Mary’s College Academic Senate approved the model for the undergraduate Core Curriculum, which consisted of 32 learning goals in three major groupings of student learning: Habits of Mind, Pathways to Knowledge, and Engaging the World.

The Academic Blueprint and the learning goals of the Core Curriculum were developed in tandem and in many ways share a symbiotic relationship. The fundamental principles, manifest in the Core Curriculum, are those which guide the Academic Blueprint.

The Core Curriculum Implementation Committee, of which Mathematics Professor Jim Sauerberg was a member, then took up the task of defining the learning outcomes for each of the goals. In other words, “What sorts of educational experiences must occur for a student to satisfy a Core goal? Why should [we] be interested in this question as a part of implementation?” Sauerberg explains. And finally, the Core Curriculum Committee, led by Sauerberg as chair from 2011 to the present, sought to validate courses and academic experiences to ensure the desired learning is achieved across a student’s time at Saint Mary’s.

The goal isn’t to have students take 32 different courses. The goal is a Saint Mary’s education. We believe that these courses build from each other into some coherent whole,” Sauerberg said. “Over time, hopefully students will be able to see how their scientific understanding played into Collegiate Seminar, how their practice for shared inquiry in Collegiate Seminar has helped them in their history course.

Sauerberg also noted that by giving students an opportunity to put their education into practice, the Community Engagement learning goal helps make their education “real.”

“When I’m engaging in the community, suddenly I see why one might want to know these things, and further than that, what I am learning is mine. All of a sudden it’s no longer the professor’s education that I have to partake in,” Sauerberg said.

And while there are many new elements included in the new Core, Sauerberg is sure to point out its connection to tradition. “This ‘new Saint Mary’s Core Curriculum’ is really an outgrowth of the traditional liberal arts focus of the College,” he said.
Prepare students for ethical and effective engagement in a diverse and global environment.

KEY OUTCOMES

• Expanded knowledge and practice of ethical and inclusive communication across campus, from updating program review and performance guidelines to holding workshops and retreats for faculty, staff, and students. Results include measurable declines in perceived racial tension on campus, according to the Campus Climate survey.
• Increased the diversity of faculty, staff, graduate, and undergraduate students and their satisfaction with the diversity of the student body.
• Facilitated learning that advances inclusive community, with students reporting more meaningful and honest discussions about race/ethnic relations outside of class and rating their ability to “get along with people of different races/nations” up to 54% higher than peer institutions.
• Increased global learning, exceeding the plan target of a 50% increase in study abroad destinations, doubling the number of students and scholarships for January Term travel; revision of both the Core Curriculum and graduate and professional programs, such as the M.B.A., and new annual exchanges with international institutions, both sending Saint Mary’s students abroad and hosting students and faculty from other institutions.

SAINT MARY’S makes compelling contributions to students’ lives. No other institution brings such diverse students to the Catholic intellectual tradition throughout their collegiate experiences. Our Academic Blueprint promoted excellence by bringing students together, learning from and understanding different experiences and perspectives, and developing cultural competence and engaged citizenship among all members of our community. Our vision is affirmed by the Christian Brothers’ Circular 461 from 2010 which states that “Lasallian educational centers” must be “places where welcome, peace and respect are lived out in communities characterized by the acceptance of each human person, where being different is an enriching component of community life.”
Promote learning and teaching for innovation, creativity, and collaboration.

At Saint Mary’s, markers of academic excellence include the scholarly achievements of our faculty and students, the engagement of students with full-time faculty and the relevance of our education to achieving a meaningful life. In addition to recognizing and supporting increased achievement of individuals, the Academic Blueprint enhanced faculty and student collaboration, promoted innovative pedagogical and curricular initiatives, and led to a forward-looking technology plan, advancing elements that are woven into the fabric of Saint Mary’s—constant collaboration, a commitment to excellent teaching, and significant scholarly creativity and discovery.

KEY OUTCOMES

• Increased support for faculty and student scholarship and creativity, including expanded collaborative research grants for students; a Kalmovitz School of Education Action Research Symposium; four annual faculty recognition awards of $5,000 each for early career achievement, service, teaching, and research; 50% increase in students engaged in summer research; and $100,000 for a new internal Faculty Research Grant program.

• Increase in grant acquisition, including a $250,000 Keck Grant for a digital media lab and corresponding programs, Clare Booth Luce Foundation grants in support of low-income female students pursuing STEM careers, and a National Science Foundation grant of over $600,000 for STEM student scholarships and programs.

• Facility renovations that include a $1M+ upgrade to infrastructure of St. Albert Hall Library and remodeling of existing library space; additional faculty office and improved instructional space with the renovation of the Psychology Annex; a new SEBA Media Lab to assist faculty in developing skills to deliver online course content effectively.

• Completed and began implementation of a new Technology Strategic Plan. Both hybrid courses for January Term and a “Digital Driver License” program for faculty teaching online were initiated; the School of Economics and Business Administration’s EMBA program was ranked second in California by U.S. News & World Report.

• Launched new programs, including the Master of Fine Arts in Dance, Master of Science in Accounting, and 4+1 Master of Arts in Leadership.

• Expanded Writing Center support for undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty.

• Increase in student concerts and recitals from seven in 2008-09 to 76 in 2014-15, with more than $40,000 dedicated annually to travel for acclaimed performances.

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Students often come to the College because of the personal attention they receive, high quality engagement with faculty, academic majors and programs, and an environment of academic achievement. They often leave with a greater desire to help others who are in difficulty, create original and artistic works, keep up to date with political affairs, and promote racial understanding and improve understanding of other countries and cultures. Our initiatives in expanded community partnerships, leadership programs, and environmental sustainability all contributed to creating educational experiences that are central to our mission.

Goal 3

Build leadership that advances social justice.

Key Outcomes

- Redesigned curriculum across the College, such as new Core Curriculum requirements of Community Engagement and Common Good, new Community Engagement and Sustainability designations in the Core Curriculum; and redesigning the existing Liberal and Civic Studies to become a program in Justice, Community, and Leadership.
- Launched the School of Economics and Business “Think Globally, Lead Responsibly” strategic plan that included new mission fellowships for faculty and staff, endowed professorships, expansion of the Elfenworks Center for Responsible Business, and creation of a new student-managed socially responsible investment fund.
- Named to the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll for eight years in a row, including “With Distinction” in 2010 and 2014.
- Increased perceived connections between academic programs and mission of students and alumni, with 79% of alumni stating that the curricula of Saint Mary’s have appropriate expressions of the College’s Catholic identity.
- Launched a Master of Arts in Leadership for Social Justice.
- Established the Center for Environmental Literacy.

Nancy Lam and Responsible Business

Nancy Lam, assistant professor in the Graduate Business Program of the School of Economics and Business Administration (SEBA), has established herself as an innovative thinker and teacher. Among the recognitions for her achievements so far—a teaching innovation grant to bring creative technical solutions to the teaching of management; a best paper award from the Third Annual American Business Research Conference in New York in 2011; and two Teaching Excellence Awards from SEBA in 2012 and 2014.

In 2013, Lam was awarded the Guyette Professorship in Responsible Leadership, the first to hold the endowed professorship established by Kay and Jim Guyette ’67. As the Guyette Professor, Lam mentors a small group of seasoned juniors and seniors who are selected as Fellows of a program that connects them to the executives of such companies as Apple and PBS and the wisdom they have accrued in their careers. This fellowship work creates solutions to real-world problems—like assessing the Bay Area economy for the California Bank of Commerce. Not a typical project for undergraduates, Lam said, “But a real tool for the bank, which asked us to assist them with their growth goals.” The Fellows also attend and make the most of an annual leadership conference in Los Angeles.

Endowed professorships such as Lam’s are important tools for hiring and retaining high-quality faculty, especially in such competitive areas as accounting, finance and strategy, and for elevating the learning experience of our students.

Lam, a native Californian, earned her undergraduate degree at UC Berkeley; a master’s degree in management at New York University and a Ph.D. in Organizational Behavior from New York University’s Stern School of Business. She teaches managing and leading contemporary organizations, managing creativity and innovation, and organizational behavior.
Our highly effective teaching practices are nationally recognized, such as our hybrid graduate programs and our collaborations in student and faculty research, creative activities, and leadership development. We know we must also move beyond the classroom to ensure student success. Throughout the life of the Academic Blueprint we have undertaken activities to create a foundation for success for our students. We have increased financial aid, created robust peer mentoring programs, and established and renewed partnerships with community-based organizations. We have created and expanded our summer session, launched new graduate and professional programs, enhanced academic support services and high-impact practices such as undergraduate research, study abroad, service learning, and internships. Our efforts have resulted in real gains in student achievement and satisfaction across faculty, staff, and students.

KEY OUTCOMES

- Increased satisfaction with advising, both graduate and undergraduate.
- Launched initiatives to facilitate student connection to campus, including “green” and international living-learning communities and expanded meal plan to include Moraga restaurants.
- Surpassed goal of 50 additional undergraduate students in summer session, from 98 in 2010 to 277 students in 2014, allowing more than 30 students to complete their degree with an additional class. Revenue expectations consistently exceed goals.

ACHIEVING HIGH POTENTIAL

Beginning with 25 students in 1973, the High Potential Program (HP) has grown to nearly 200 learners annually. The program is geared toward first-generation and low-income students and is designed to draw on their strength and resiliency as they go from high school to college.

Those who are particularly motivated and demonstrate leadership potential get priority consideration for the program.

The evolution of a student from freshman to senior year is remarkable, said Tracy Pasqua Dea, co-director of the program and director of student engagement and academic success. “You see the student who was so shy and then the seniors who do all sorts of things, living up to what they set out to do when they arrived on campus.”

Admitted HP students attend the Summer Academic Institute for Leaders and Scholars (SAILS) that introduces them to college life—such as classes, academic empowerment, and workshops in skills they didn’t need to succeed. They participate in a four-year advising cohort beholden to the needs of a first-generation student, and they meet regularly with a peer mentor and a student engagement and academic success specialist. It’s the beginning of support and success from freshman year to graduation.
Many of the Academic Blueprint initiatives will live beyond the time frame of the plan. Continuing efforts include:

- Funding for all qualified students for January Term travel and funding scholarships for full-term study abroad.
- Increased recruitment of tenure-track faculty, with particular emphasis on diversity.
- Continued improvement and expansion of faculty office, learning, and laboratory spaces.
- Construction of a new Library and Learning Commons.
- Continued improvement in graduation rates and timely degree completions.
- Increased knowledge about the career and graduate/professional school trajectory of students.
- Increased investment to hire greater numbers of full-time faculty.

JULIE FORD AND THE GOLD MEDAL CHOIRS

Five years ago when Julie Ford came on board to conduct the small Saint Mary’s choir the Nightingaels, there weren’t uniforms, a dedicated practice space, or formal auditions, but there was a strong desire for success. And Glee was one of the most watched shows on television.

“After a semester, the students got excited and they said we will help you recruit new students but we really think you need to capitalize on the show Glee. And I said, ‘Glee club, I don’t even really know what that is.’ Through it I can do jazz, I can do pop, it will be more fun for me teaching beginning singers how to match pitch doing Beatles and much more modern songs,” Ford said.

Ford noted that when she arrived, the music majors and the casual singers were mixed together in a 20-person group. “I just thought I’m going to lose the students who are talented and are studying music if we have this combination, so I proposed: taking eight students to form the Chamber Singers,” Ford said. “But I asked them to help continue supporting these beginning singers because that’s how it works.”

Fast forward to 2015, and it’s a very different scene. Ford directs two choirs, the Chamber Singers and the Glee Club, auditioning more students than she can accommodate in the 40 spots she has available. Dance professor Catherine Marie Davalos serves as the official choreographer. And most significantly, Ford led both choirs to gold medals at the World Choir Games in Riga, Latvia in 2014, and as a result, a Saturday night performance at Carnegie Hall in spring 2015.

Through new ways of teaching and investment in the program, the choirs have achieved what was hoped in the beginning five years ago—success. When asked what else might have contributed, Ford said, “The mind and the body and the spirit always have to be engaged. There’s always that connection, and I think they’re engaged on a level that it gives it a higher importance.”
AN APP FOR THE LINDSAY WILDLIFE MUSEUM

A collaboration between Saint Mary’s and the Lindsay Wildlife Museum (LWM) resulted in a mobile app that allows area residents to learn about local wildlife and share photos and experiences via social media.

The creation of the app also gave Saint Mary’s students the chance to learn and develop programming code for a mobile app with a vividly real purpose. They worked on the project for almost a year and were enthusiastic about its success. Mathematics and Computer Science Professor Weiwei Pan, who served as the project manager and a developer on the SMC team that created the app, said the project reflects the College’s mission of working through the lens of science. “Saint Mary’s encourages students and faculty to link up with communities around the Bay Area through academic programs that include civic engagement,” she said. “The LWM Encounters app is part of that effort.”

The app and the partnership supported the LWM mission of fostering greater appreciation for the natural world and the wildlife that share it with us. The app includes a field guide of local wildlife, tips on what to do when encountering these wild neighbors, and ways to connect with and support the educational programs and service offered by the museum.

“This has been a very rewarding experience for me, both professionally and personally,” said Michele Seber, director of animal encounters and interim wildlife rehabilitation director at the museum. “I am proud of the work done by the students. They really listened to their client, were very engaged in the project, and were a pleasure to work with.”

The partnership and the mobile app were made possible by a grant from the Science Education for New Civic Engagement and Responsibilities and its Informal Science Education (SENCER-ISE) initiative, which aims to make science accessible to the public.

In memory of Brother Donald Mansir, FSC (1949-2011), who was a pivotal voice in developing the Academic Blueprint to advance the mission of Saint Mary’s College.